

1

Exemplary Formations

You need robust dialogue to surface the realities of the business.

—Bossidy & Charan (2002, p. 23)

Profiles

It is natural to learn from example, whether good or bad. Given a choice, however, we most often turn to the positive rather than the negative—if for no other reason than to avoid the distress and disappointment associated with things done poorly. Learning from success also holds an edge over learning from mistakes because we associate expertise with things done well. That said, this inquiry opted to engage in reflective conversation with leaders who were reputed exemplars of effective leadership.

Because their stories form the backbone of the leadership conversations that unfold in the following chapters, a brief introduction to the cast of storytellers is presented here. Short biographical profiles provide perspective on the collective leadership experience that was engaged in reflective conversation.

GOVERNMENT LEADERS

Michael Barber, Chet Bradley, Prime Minister Helen Clark, and Fanny Law were influential, reform-minded government officials. They were widely recognized for making an impact on their state or country's policies in a manner that enriched the quality of life for the populations they represented.

Michael Barber developed a strong desire to contribute to the greater good from his early Quaker roots in England. An educator by training, Michael communicated his philosophy of education in a book titled *The Learning Game*. When Tony Blair was running for prime minister, Michael was asked to articulate

4 LEADERSHIP FORMED

the candidate's platform for educational reform. Since then, Michael has served as lead policy analyst and advisor in the Labor government not only for education, but also for transportation and health care. As Director of the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit, he influenced the environment that affected his nation's children, as well as the educational system they experienced.

Chet Bradley hailed from a rural Wisconsin farm family in the midwestern United States. He liked to joke about his name: "Can you imagine someone looking into a crib and saying, 'Let's name him Chester?'" As a young athlete and health buff, he started his career teaching physical education and history. He was later transformed by a powerful learning experience in an innovative master's degree program in leadership at the University of Oregon. His resulting knowledge and skill, combined with a strong commitment to healthy kids and healthy schools, led him to a leadership position in health education at the Wisconsin Department of public Instruction.

Helen Clark grew up in rural New Zealand in the home of conservative parents. Recognized early for her intellect, she was sent to boarding school in Auckland as a young preteen. She formed strong values about fairness and access to opportunity that drove her to eventual leadership in the country's labor party. After a long and outspoken career in parliament, Helen was the first elected female to hold office as the Prime Minister of New Zealand. She also enjoyed the reputation of being the most results-oriented prime minister in New Zealand's history.

Fanny Law spent her early childhood in a crowded apartment in Hong Kong along with her seven siblings and a father who instilled a strong work ethic and high expectations. Finding a career in public service allowed her to serve and protect the rights of the people of Hong Kong. As a Chinese woman in a British-controlled protectorate, Fanny was in the unique position to help negotiate the return of Hong Kong to Chinese rule in 1999. As the Secretary of education and Manpower, Fanny used her influence to transform the Hong Kong education system toward a better investment in the community's youth and Hong Kong's future.

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION LEADERS

Margo Dévai, Gabor Halmai, CJ Nickerson, and Mechai Viraviadya led nonprofit organizations that were mostly self-created. They worked on changing systems from the outside—with all the freedom and inventiveness that their outsider status allowed.

Margo Dévai spent most of her life and early career under the constraints of communist Hungary. Her family survived multiple hardships and, as a young woman, Margo learned to "hide her light under a bushel" and avoid leadership responsibilities. Slowly and reluctantly, she stepped up to lead as a university

teacher dedicated to the creation of self-esteem in young children. As a result of her research, persistence, and the opportunity for self-determination after the demise of communism, Margo found herself leading a nonprofit Comprehensive Health Education Foundation that positively impacted teachers and students throughout Hungary.

Gabor Halmi presented a case for being the most extreme workaholic in the sample—a significant distinction considering the competition. Driven by his passion for social justice, he held not one but three demanding leadership roles in the emerging democracy of Hungary. Having suffered the ravages of Eastern European anti-Semitism early in his life and career, Gabor dedicated his life to the law and the rights and freedoms that post-communist Hungary had to offer. His role as President of the Soros Foundation in Hungary offered him the opportunity to provide resources for initiatives that supported human rights.

CJ Nickerson, a self-described American entrepreneur, left the confines of state department bureaucracy to build a private foundation that would fuel the health promotion and education efforts he valued. As a leader who always had the ability to “figure it out,” he used his creativity and perseverance to leverage health education products into a self-sustaining Comprehensive Health Education Foundation with an endowment of over 30 million dollars. His innovative organization made a real difference in the development of healthy lifestyles for children in the state of Washington and throughout the country.

Mechai Viraviadya, better known as the “Condom King” in Thailand, made his initial impact on the welfare of his countrymen as Minister of Health by promoting population control. He led the fight against AIDS in a country that claimed one of the highest growth rates of the deadly disease through his creative and playful promotion of the condom. As a result, Thailand became one of the first countries to reverse the rising tide of the spread of HIV. Born of a Thai father and British mother, Mechai learned what it meant to be “the deviant” in early childhood and used those insights to advantage as he successfully built his own nonprofit Population Development Association to continue the work of eradicating poverty in his homeland.

K–12 EDUCATION LEADERS

Tim Brighthouse, Rod Chamberlain, Jeanne Dukes, Ian Fox, Nola Hambleton, Mandy Macleod, Gary Rasmussen, and Patrick Sayne were inventive educators committed to the success of all students and the teachers who serve them. They worked in public, private, and international schools.

Tim Brighthouse might best be described as Albert Einstein on fast-forward. His wild-eyed, bushy-haired, and intense intelligence belied a deeply reflective nature, undergirded by a lifelong commitment to educational success for all children. As the Superintendent of Birmingham, the second largest school

6 LEADERSHIP FORMED

district in England serving over 100,000 students, Tim decried the fact that he would be forced to retire at the age of 65. Like most of the other leaders interviewed for this project, retirement was neither an appealing nor a rational orientation. As Tim put it, "How could you ever be done?"

Rod Chamberlain found his niche early as a leader in independent schools. Committed to high standards of excellence for himself and others, his Mennonite upbringing prepared him to accept challenge as the norm and creative solutions as the natural outcome. As the headmaster of the Kamehameha School in Maui, Hawaii, Rod was charged with carrying on a seventh-generation vision held for Hawaiian students by the granddaughter of King Kamehameha himself: to build the first complete K–12 campus beyond the original school campus on Oahu.

Jeanne Dukes exuded a passion for serving those off the norm, that is, kids and adults who didn't fit the typical mold in public schooling. As an educational administrator for San Luis Obispo County Office of Education in California, Jeanne devoted her time and energy to the creation, staffing, and success of programs for at-risk students. As someone who came late to leadership after raising a family and starting a second career, Jeanne brought a full-time commitment to championing the rights of students who lacked advocates. She was also committed to supporting the "quirky" teachers who worked with such students on a daily basis.

Ian Fox was a study in perseverance. As a principal in the same middle-level school in Auckland for 14 years, he and his staff developed a prototype for student portfolios that became a national model in New Zealand. Ian believed that successful schools formed around a catalyst that bound school and community toward a common goal. The creation and execution of a comprehensive student assessment system provided just such focus for his school. As long as the direction was sound, the results were promising, and the task was unfinished, Ian intended to stay and see it through.

Nola Hambleton had gone beyond the typical school principalship to provide leadership for an international principals' association. As one of the first female principals in New Zealand, Nola was accustomed to blazing new paths for herself and for the organizations she led. Not satisfied with having an impact at the local level alone, she became the president of an international principals' association to provide a network of support for leaders such as herself.

Mandy Macleod intended to move from Scotland to Belgium for a year or two, but stayed for 30 years. As the successful headmaster of the middle school at St. John's International School in Waterloo, Mandy was known as a culture builder and nurturer in her school. Teachers spoke of her with fondness and trust, acknowledging that her door was always open no matter what level of need they expressed. With an eye always trained on student success, Mandy believed that her job as headmaster was to support St. John's teachers and empower them to do their jobs well.

Gary Rasmussen was an anomaly in the school business sector. Rather than being “Mr. No,” as many business managers are often perceived, Gary viewed his role as that of facilitator of organizational mission. Using creative problem solving and an orientation toward stakeholder involvement, Gary operationalized the mission at Hong Kong International School through the deployment of targeted resources. Devoted to both his school and his family, Gary was a leader who worked hard to find and achieve a healthy balance between work and home life.

Patrick Sayne’s experience and tenacity as a school superintendent belied the twinkle in his eye and wry smile on his lips. Using self-deprecating humor to demystify the role of “top dog” in Paso Robles School District in central California, Patrick’s perspective was both realistic and idealistic. After 24 years in the superintendency in various districts, he invested his mental and emotional energy in the long view to minimize the day-to-day setbacks. As Patrick noted, “There’s always another day.”

PUBLIC HEALTH LEADERS

Alex Banful, Donald Gwira, and Beth Stevenson served organizations dedicated to the promotion of public health. They pursued their work as leaders of nonprofit agencies dedicated to health education and discovery of effective treatment and cures.

Alex Banful articulated a commitment that he lived out daily as the CEO of a nonprofit public health organization in Ghana, West Africa. Having left the private sector 10 years earlier, Alex had built the Ghana Social Marketing Foundation, a successful nongovernment organization that provided resources for AIDS and malaria prevention while also addressing other pressing health issues in rural areas of his country. Alex worked a relentless schedule, fueled by an entrepreneurial spirit and a drive to eradicate diseases dangerous to his fellow Ghanaians.

Donald Gwira was among the youngest leaders in the group of 36, a “30-something” man who was already making his mark as Communications Officer for a multinational health organization called Sight Savers International. As communications expert, he led the public relations effort across West Africa to get the word out about the prevention and cure of blindness. His creativity and “way with words” was effective in making the gift of sight a high priority for those within the reach of his information campaigns.

Beth Stevenson mixed creativity, risk taking, and humor in everything she did. As the oldest of three independent girls, Beth looked to her mother and grandmother as role models of strong professional women. Luckily, Beth found an avenue for channeling her energy into a profession that blended her twin passions, education and health promotion. As Director of Childhood

8 LEADERSHIP FORMED

Cancer Prevention and Programs at the American Cancer Society, Beth created, supported, and sustained innovative programs that demonstrated real results in health promotion programs for children.

FOREIGN SERVICE LEADERS

Brenda Schoonover served as a foreign diplomat, building bridges of understanding across cultures and amid conflict. Similarly, Roger Harmon served his country as Director of the Peace Corps in Thailand.

Brenda Schoonover was a model of humility as a leader. After serving as Ambassador to Togo, Brenda was asked to come out of retirement to support the new Ambassador to Brussels as the Chief of Mission. Her experience and sound judgment were invaluable to that ambassador's transition from a business career, with little experience in international affairs, to diplomat. Her life-long commitment to represent her country and willingness to put duty before self epitomized her leadership calling.

Roger Harmon was afflicted with an adventuresome spirit that landed him in Thailand for over two decades. As Director of Peace Corps in Bangkok, Roger supported the volunteers who provide aid and assistance in the villages of rural areas. By staying connected to the needs of those served and those providing the service, Roger led authentically and realistically.

JUSTICE SYSTEM LEADERS

Richard Bissen defended and protected the public safety of his county with a gentle but firm administration of the law. As a civil rights attorney, Denese Henare committed her career to securing equal rights for native Maori in New Zealand.

Richard Bissen was District Attorney of Maui County when interviewed and is now the First Deputy Attorney General for the State of Hawaii in Honolulu. He is the first native Hawaiian to achieve such rank in the justice system in his state. Richard reflected a laid-back and fun-loving nature often associated with his culture, but his deep commitment revealed a serious determination to protect his fellow Hawaiians, native or not. Within minutes of meeting him, people experienced a deep sense of trust and security that conveyed the assurances of a newfound friend.

Denese Henare was a fighter. As an attorney with Maori roots, she dedicated herself to the preservation of Maori rights guaranteed in New Zealand's Waitanga Treaty. In the Maori culture, it is said that women carry the tribal wisdom. As a result of her cultural heritage and legal training, Denese felt a deep sense of responsibility for ensuring the fair and equitable treatment of her kin and the best interests of her homeland.

HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY LEADERS

Julianne Lowe and Leotis Watson literally led to serve in the hospitality industry, giving care and attention to the weary tourist and harried traveler.

Julianne Lowe had eyes that sparkled with humor and mischievousness, qualities necessary to her success as a director for AAT King in New Zealand. Her patience, “people sense,” and positive outlook on life were part disposition and part skill, developed early in her career as a nurse. She later used these skills to support and “shepherd” tourists around her beautiful country. Julianne’s self-proclaimed goal was to help others discover the beauty and diversity of her native land, while at the same time renewing her own sense of wonder on a regular basis.

Leotis Watson “owned” the lobby of the Emory Conference Center in Atlanta, Georgia. When a customer stepped inside, he was there to serve the person’s every need. As the head concierge supervising 25 employees, Leotis was a success story of the first order. Having survived a period of homelessness in San Francisco, Leotis’s belief in himself and a god-given duty to help others propelled him to become a successful model and leader within his niche in the hospitality industry.

HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERS

John Hood and Ross Gilbert provided leadership in the most intransigent of all institutions, that is, higher education, and they did so with remarkable success and aplomb.

John Hood was selected “Man of the Year” by a prominent New Zealand magazine for his success as a businessman who made the transition to university administration. As Vice Chancellor of the University of Auckland, John successfully bridged the gap between the private and public sectors, making a notable impact as a leader in both. Referencing core beliefs to guide practice in both arenas, John’s clear focus, articulate vision, and strong faith in the capabilities of others helped to make a real difference in the life of the university and the university’s relationship with the greater Auckland community.

Ross Gilbert was a professor who gave higher education a good name. As Director of Music Education for the Sydney Conservatory of Music, Ross had lived and breathed teacher preparation for over 30 years. Mixing the power of relationships with the science of research, Ross developed a successful, cutting edge program that turned musicians into teachers—no small feat. With an office located in the midst of the Sydney Botanical Gardens, Ross uses his surroundings to facilitate reflection on practice, for himself and his students.

CORPORATE LEADERS

Corporate sector leaders included Boon Yoon Chiang, CEO of multinational Jardine-Matheson in Singapore; Bob Knight, CFO for the Florida-based

10 LEADERSHIP FORMED

Paul Homes construction company; Ulice Payne, General Manager for the Milwaukee Brewers baseball team; Kuami Pianim, CEO of a Ghanaian investment firm; Christine Rodriguez, a Vice President for Rockwell Automation in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and Rich Teerlink, former CEO of Harley-Davidson Motorcycles.

Boon Yoon Chiang expressed himself with a gentle smile and soft-spoken humility. Such humility was all the more notable, given his position as CEO of Jardine-Matheson, the largest trading company in Singapore, a company that employed over 6,000 people. Yoon Chiang began his career as a journalist where he honed the social skills that were later used in building business relationships. His keen “people sense” allowed him to hire and nurture well-matched employees. His faith in the worth of employees promoted investment in their success and, in turn, gained their commitment to the mission of Jardine-Matheson.

Bob Knight was brought into the fledgling Paul Homes construction corporation to grow the business to the next level. That he did. Paul Homes became a large, award-winning home construction company in southwest Florida under Bob’s visionary and collaborative leadership. Characteristically positive in his outlook, Bob saw potential in every employee and felt personally responsible for insuring employee success commensurate with the success of the company.

Ulice Payne aspired to live his commitments and embody his core values. As a product of a small steel town on the banks of the Allegheny, where open-hearth furnaces ran 24/7, Ulice learned that leadership was about “showing up” and being himself. True to his nature, he was known for taking an ethical stance when decisions were tough and results hung in the balance.

Kuami Pianim personified courage in the face of adversity and faith in the future. A successful corporate leader and social activist, Kuami was imprisoned for 10 years as a political foe of one of the former military regimes in Ghana. Ever a populist, Kuami fought to preserve human rights and dignity, even while in prison. On his release, he became a leading candidate for his country’s presidency until the reigning president ordered a constitutional amendment to restrict “ex-convicts” from becoming state officials. Undaunted, Kuami formed New World Investments Ltd, with the mission of building the economy of his impoverished, developing country.

Christine Rodriguez was the first Latina to hold a significant executive position at Rockwell Automation. As Vice President for State and Community Relations, she was the face of Rockwell in the greater community. Her job was to enhance the image of the company as a good corporate citizen. As she noted, “The community where the company lives and works gives the business license to operate. It is our job to help maintain a balanced community. This is a legacy that I take very seriously.”

Rich Teerlink helped put Harley-Davidson Motorcycles on the map. A self-effacing leader, Rich was disposed to credit others for his own remarkable

accomplishments. Accessible, open, and committed to “giving back,” Rich exemplified faith in others and the power of teams to solve their own problems and create their own destiny. As a result, his unified business philosophy is studied in management programs around the world.

FINE AND APPLIED ARTS LEADERS

Three gentlemen of diverse interests and experiences represented the arts. Gavan Flick was an art dealer who created and operated the first and only Aborigine-owned art gallery in Sydney. Don Hazelwood, also from Australia, was a gifted violinist who rose to the status of concertmaster for the Sydney Symphony. Frank Lukasavitz was an industrial designer and founder of a premier postsecondary art school in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Gavan Flick was a success story in a land that often withheld success from those of aboriginal descent. Through grit and determination, he dedicated his life to the preservation of aboriginal art and support for budding young Aborigine artists. His hard-won success was apparent in the stylish Gavala gallery he opened in the Stanley Marketplace in an upscale section of Sydney, Australia. True to his commitment, profits from artwork sales were shared and invested beyond the usual gallery-artist arrangements to further encourage the endeavors of Aborigine artists.

Don Hazelwood just wanted to be the best violin player he could be. In the process, he became the first chair of the Sydney Symphony, which included the responsibilities of concertmaster. That job entailed leadership navigation of issues and procedures between the conductor and the rest of the orchestra. Don’s commitment to the orchestra compelled his successful service in that role for many years.

Frank Lukasavitz was cofounder of one of the top five design schools in America. Following his early success as an industrial designer, Frank worked with several colleagues to create an art school that would promote and develop applied arts in the Midwest. Thirty years later, the Milwaukee School of Art and Design was one of the best-known and highest-ranked art schools in the United States. Well past retirement age for most people, Frank still taught at the Milwaukee Institute for Art and Design out of love for his students and his commitment to the field.

Further Conversation

With reference to the profiles, this is an appropriate moment for you to introduce yourself as the 37th participant in the leadership conversations that will unfold over the next 10 chapters. The following reflection exercise will assist you to that end.

12 LEADERSHIP FORMED

EXERCISE 1.1 Further Conversation: Leadership Profile

In the space below, write a brief leadership profile of yourself that describes you by:

A. Name:

B. Geographical Location:

C. General Biographical Information:

D. Leadership Experience:

E. Leadership Passions and Achievements: