

7 R's of Actualizing Leadership: An Introduction

A Primer Highlighting The Fundamentals of Leadership Literacy

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I believe it's fair to say that St. Augustine of Hippo had no idea his mention of reading, writing, and arithmetic, way back in AD 401, would have such an enduring legacy.

Whether in Greek, Latin, or English the notion of the 3 R's, as it is commonly referred today, immediately conjures up memories of our quest to master the functional skills of education. I think it is also fair to say those memories affirm that mastery requires time and investment.

Practically all of our academic and vocational successes required at least a rudimentary facility with the 3 R's. It could be argued that the 3 R's are the literal bedrock of our progress as a society. In fact, St. Augustine's 3 R's, collectively, represent the very essence of literacy.

The importance of literacy is readily acknowledged and accepted as it pertains to education and finance. Yet, literacy extends beyond these obvious areas to include areas in which the notion of literacy frequently goes undiscussed.

Serendipitously, I began to ponder the idea of fundamental leadership literacy. Asking what are the essential building blocks of leadership effectiveness? What is required of a modern leader in a global marketplace? Where should leadership development begin? These questions and many others contributed to the creation of the 7 R's of Actualizing Leadership platform.

The success of every leader (specifically, successes that are ethical, legal, and moral) can be attributed to the leader excelling in the majority, if not every, component of the 7 R's platform. As the 7 R's are insightful when applied retrospectively to prior leadership situations and success, these 7 R's are also instructional when used to assess your current leadership approach.

Following is a cursory presentation of the components comprising the 7 R's of Actualizing Leadership platform.

R1 – Realness. *Inauthentic leaders are sure to produce inauspicious results.*

Being real has power that only the evolved leader truly appreciates, and has learned to leverage. Inauthenticity undermines trust and support. Today, leaders must be real. Real in presentation. Real in communication. Real in their assessment of people, situations – and potential. The most desired and influential characteristics of an Actualizing Leader, such as veracity and vulnerability, all eminent from realness.

R2 - Respectful Relationships. *Respectful relationships catapult organizations to remarkable results.*

Every leader should understand that the quality of the relationships with direct reports and coworkers has a direct impact on the quality of the process and products. Simply stated, a quality relationship is one characterized by respect. As mutual respect increases, discretionary effort increases and dysfunction decreases. It is essential to build respectful relationships within all spheres of the human interface.

R3 - Reduction of Barriers. *Reduction of barriers allows both the team and the leader to shine.*

Barriers to productivity exist in many forms and sizes. Trust, communication, team work, diversity and so many other areas are potential breeding grounds for barriers. It is incumbent upon the leader to proactively seek out these barriers and purge them from the culture. Reduction of these barriers positions the team, and the leader, to make maximum contribution to the bottom line.

R4 - Resource Development. *Exceptional leaders differentiate themselves in their willingness to invest in the training and development of their team.*

Your enterprise will be only as good as you are willing to invest in the growth and development of your human resource. When approached strategically, training, education, and coaching are the gateway to break-away performance in the marketplace. Industry leaders know the value of investing in the development of human capital. To opt to neglect investing in training and development is to place a lid on organizational growth and effectiveness.

R5 - Robust Accountability. *In absence of accountability there can never be the full actualization of potential.*

Creating a culture of robust accountability begins with the consistent practice of holding oneself accountable, and then holding each team member accountable. Accountability must become an organizational norm. Only if individuals adopt the practice of proactively initiating accountability conversation will the culture be positively impacted and transformed. Robust accountability, at all levels, is key to cultivating a mature and respectful work culture.

R6 – Resilience. *Failures are a real part of the equation, resilience is a real part of the solution.*

Leadership usually requires asking people to change in some way. These requests are frequently met with resistance and skepticism. Leaders must develop a level of resilience that allows them to bounce back time after time when projects proceed much slower than expected or desired – or fail flat out. There is no way around this point. A leader without resilience is soon to succumb to the inertia of change.

R7 – Results-Oriented. *Results Reign! Your results will either distinguish you, disgrace you, or destroy you.*

The marketplace evaluates a leader by the results he or she achieves. Achieving market impacting results is a process, a thoughtful and thorough process, not an instantaneous event. Today, the hyper-competitive nature of business requires and rewards leaders who have a focused and unwavering result orientation.

Just as St. Augustine of Hippo's condensation of the key competencies of education continue to serve as shorthand for educational literacy, the 7 R's of Actualizing Leadership have the potential to do the same for our understanding of leadership effectiveness and the development of that effectiveness.

Leadership Lesson: Illiteracy is a major problem. According to a study conducted by the U.S. Department of Education, approximately 14 percent of the U.S. population can't read. Without a strong foundation academic literacy is elusive and improbable. And the same is true of leadership literacy. Just as students are expected to master the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic, leaders must master the 7 R's of Actualizing Leadership. Leadership literacy is vital to leadership success.

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