Are you An Achiever Leader?

He gets up at five every morning, goes to the gym and is at his desk by 6.30, he’s cleared his email box by 7.00 and is fully up to speed with the state of the Asian markets. His wife probably won’t see him until 8.30pm, by which time the kids will be in bed and most of his weekend will be spent recovering his energy to start all over again on Monday. All the time though he’ll have his mobile on. He willingly takes calls day and night from colleagues, as he prefers to be at the centre of all activities. People enjoy his vitality, but few want to be his friend a he is just not that reliable. Afterall, a new deal may come in and that dinner with a friend will get blown out at the last minute. He is clear what success means for him and he will doggedly pursue it, whether in the form of seniority in the organization or in the number of cars he has. Although perhaps a little stereotyped, you have just met someone at the achievement stage of leadership development.

The achiever excels in organizational sports that have clear boundaries and goals of success. A person at this stage of development is likely to positively relish the achievement of tough financial targets, the turnaround of an ailing business or the green site of a start-up firm. Where they are likely to fail or at the very least be less effective is pursuits and activities where the boundaries are less clear, for example in the case of cross-product collaboration. Achievers also tend to be impatient, particularly if they believe others are slow to harness energy and commitment for they way see as “so obviously a winning idea”. What they might fail to appreciate, is that winning idea my have negative connotations for others parts of the business and that the “slow” colleague is systemically taking this into account.

The central challenge for people at the achiever stage is to get to know what Jung referred to as the “shadow” side of themselves. The shadow refers to the hidden place where we store denied aspects of ourselves, both positive as well as negative aspects. The shadow includes our fear responses of fight, flight or freeze. When we feel under threat in some way, whether real or imagined, we tend to respond in primitive ways. We come out of our organisational cave, wielding our club at the nearest around us, or we hide in that cave, hoping no one will find us, or freeze like a rabbit in shock, fixed to the spot. When we try to suppress these lower needs, and try to shut them away, close off their usual expressions, they grow another kind of life of their own and ooze out, taking on undesirable, unrecognisable forms. What is hidden within must become manifest.
sooner or later, no matter how much we may try to do otherwise. It is always just a question of time.

The unconscious is more than simply that which is not conscious. It includes incompatible needs and impulses. For example I claim to myself that I want to work in banking but an unconscious part of me wants to be in Cape Cod on the beach. Although I respond with envy to a friend who has chosen a more relax way of life, I attribute this to his general incompetence in life. As I do not consciously recognise and accept this conflict within myself, I sabotage my success at work. I turn up late for meetings and I fail to deliver my promises to others. The unconscious also includes the way we displace feelings towards one person onto another. For example, I react angrily to my secretary when in fact I am angry with my boss. Or I act in an oppositional way towards the colleague who reminds me of my father. The unconscious has a timeless quality.

A useful way to understand the shadow aspects of your behaviour is through feedback. Feedback from others gives us a real sense of the impact with have on other people.

**Experiment**

Ask three colleagues and three friends for feedback about the impact you have on them. Ask them to be as specific as possible:

1. What do you like in my behaviour with you?
2. What would you most like to change about me?
3. What would you like to see me do more or less of in the way I interact with you?