

The New Leadership
by Klaus-Peter Gushurst

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The New Leadership — Sober, Spirited, and Spiritual

Leadership styles today combine the classic values of discipline and execution with the contemporary values of openness and natural expression.

by Klaus-Peter Gushurst

The New Economy of the 1990s brought much that was new and refreshing to work — casual office culture, enthusiastic employees, nonhierarchical leadership principles. It also led to excesses (on-site personal fitness trainers, luxury cars, stratospheric salaries for unseasoned managers, stock options for everyone) that topped even the avarice of the 1980s. That party is over, for now. Internet entrepreneurs (the few that are left from headier days and the latest entrants) are more restrained. Corporate leaders are reverting to classic styles of leadership. In Europe, CEOs such as Gunter Thielen of Bertelsmann AG and Jürgen Dormann of ABB Group are concentrating on basic tasks: business and cost consolidation, reorganization, shifting of strategic priorities, and rebuilding.

Does this imply that the managerial style the New Economy brought us is appropriate only during boom times? As we begin 2004, cautiously watching for signs of eco-

nommic recovery, should we assume that command-and-control is the prudent leadership standard?

No. The truth is, leadership styles are always evolving, with newer elements complementing more traditional ones. Increasingly, senior executives, even entire corporate cultures, are combining classic leadership values, such as discipline,

Spiritual Perspectives

In many ways, it's unsurprising that the integration of a new, younger generation of leaders into archetypal industrial enterprises is producing new leadership methods. It remains to be seen, though, whether this trend will include continued appreciation for one of the most beneficial shifts in business culture to occur

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focus, and execution, with more contemporary values, including openness, a greater emphasis on the quality of communication, and naturalness. This bodes well for the future of all companies.

during the 1990s — a greater tolerance and respect for expressing emotion and personal values, even spirituality. As Anselm Grün, a German Benedictine friar who is the business manager of the Abbey of Münsterschwarzach in Germany and

an author of many books, writes: Only the one who “is able to find his peace inside himself, and in God, may create an atmosphere of peace around himself making employees feel well and enabling them to enjoy their work.” Grün, who oversees 20 companies owned by the Benedictine order, is also an acclaimed writer in Germany, with a strong following among German CEOs.

Another clergyman, American Matthew Fox, has preached similar themes to business executives. A former member of the Dominican order, Fox now is an Episcopal priest and founder and director of the University of Creation Spirituality in

that the restlessness and tempestuousness characteristic of younger men and women who came of age as business leaders in the New Economy’s first decade is an appropriate way to lead for most companies. Indeed, many of the companies led by such executives discovered that you can’t be innovative and effective if you’re always at the mercy of your passions. Creative free spirits must also be productively guided by discipline, purpose, and accountability. “Be able to lead yourself before you lead others,” Grün writes.

Leading a company must be more than a hobby, and certainly more than fun. Leaders must

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“The new leadership combines classic leadership values, such as discipline and focus, with contemporary values of openness naturalness.”

Oakland, Calif. In his book *The Reinvention of Work — A New Vision of Livelihood for Our Time*, published by HarperCollins in 1994 (before the exuberant half of that decade), he writes: “Perhaps this reinventing of the quality of the workplace will also contribute to the reinventing of the quantity of work available. When workers have integrated spirituality with their work, their values, their creativity, addictions such as overwork and the practice of overworking employees might give way to more shared work.”

The New Sobriety

Neither Fox nor Grün would argue

demonstrate realism, maturity, knowledge, and a little wisdom. “A distinguishing mark of a ripe human being is his sobriety,” the sixth-century monk St. Benedict pointed out. He went on: “Sober is the one who sees things as they really are, not as he would like them to be.” The past years have proven our fateful tendency to cherish illusions about our economic reality. We can only hope that sobriety is now molding the thinking of future managers.

In these times of consolidation, economic weakness, and scarce funds, nobody should underestimate the importance of combining passion with patience and professionalism. +

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