



a compelling case for today's leaders to become mediators...

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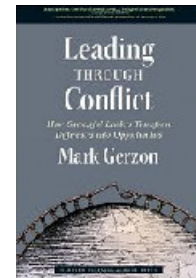
Book Corner

Leading Through Conflict by Mark Gerzon

As our world grows smaller, opportunities for conflict multiply. Mark Gerzon tells us that the task of effective leaders is to bring people together to build on differences rather than have differences create deeper divides.

Gerzon makes a compelling case for today's leaders to become a style of leader that he calls Mediator rather than styles he calls Manager and Dictator. His excellent examples create a very clear picture of these three styles. Gerzon provides eight tools that leaders can use to "transform intractable differences into progress." They are:

- Integral vision
- Systems thinking
- Presence
- Inquiry
- Conscious communication
- Dialogue
- Bridging
- Innovation



If you experience conflict anywhere in your life – at work, in the community, in your personal life, or as a member of this global world, you will find ideas and tools well worth considering and implementing.

Mark Gerzon makes a compelling case for today's leaders becoming a style of leader that he calls 'Mediator.' We agree that 'mediation' is the heart of leadership.

Over time in our work we have been asked, challenged, and debated why we would say that mediation is so important? What do we mean by 'mediation?' Why do we think that mediation is such a critical component of leadership as to be the "heart of leadership?" Since Mr. Gerzon has stated his case, albeit in a whole book, we would like to take this opportunity to state ours... in a much shorter fashion.

Highly Effective Leadership = Highly Effective Mediation:

In the Fall 2000 issue of *Collaborations* we wrote an article titled 'Scapegoats.' (That issue is available on our web sites.)

In that article we suggested that "there are three vehicles for 'unifying' a group of people, 1. use of a scapegoat, 2. use of power, and 3. the maximization of

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Highly Effective Leadership = Highly Effective Mediation

mediation.” The article then went on to discuss at length the strategy of unifying a group, team or organization against a scapegoat. This is a strategy which, while relatively easy to use, is not a good strategy for unifying people over the long haul. Please visit that article for the details of the discussion.

Our lead into that discussion on scapegoating contained this statement “the overriding objective for managers and leaders is ‘to unify a diverse group of people to work together effectively toward common purposes under varied and often difficult circumstances.’” In this article we are going to expand on that statement and discuss the “maximization of mediation” as the preferred leadership strategy.

The astute reader will have also noticed that in the Fall 2000 article we said that vehicles 2. power, and 3. mediation, for unifying a group of people would be subjects for future *Collaborations* articles. And true to our word, here we are 9 years later...

What is leadership?

We want to acknowledge and give full credit to the work of the [SYMLOG Consulting Group](#) for the definition and original thinking we will try to do justice to in this discussion.

How do *you* define leadership? Of course you can go online and find hundreds of definitions of “leadership.” Those definitions do not guide your day to day efforts. What guides you day in and day out is the mental model of leadership that you have in your head. So taking some time to get clear about how you define leadership is not just an academic exercise. Rather it is trying to examine the mental model that guides your behavior as you work with other people, groups and organizations.

The definition that I (Dave) use all the time, i.e. my mental model, and upon which we will base this article comes from the [SYMLOG Consulting Group](#).

Leadership is a process of unifying a diverse group of people to work together effectively toward common purpose(s) under varied and often difficult circumstances through the elimination of

1. scapegoating
2. judicious use of power
3. and a maximization of mediation.

One of the strongest reasons that I really like this definition of leadership is that I can picture myself doing it. I have a hard time seeing myself as ‘visionary,’ ‘charismatic,’ and some of the other descriptors found in many definitions of leadership. However, I can clearly see myself working to unify people toward common causes.

At the end of the day, if I want to know what kind of leader I am, I can just ask myself, ‘have I contributed to *unifying* this group, or organization toward a common purpose, or have I contributed to splintering, dividing, confusing their efforts?’

We could parse the definition at length - perhaps in a future issue of *Collaborations*...

Right now we are interested in vehicle 3. “a maximization of mediation.” Before getting to that however, consider this: the definition above implies that there are only three ways to unify people: with scapegoats, through the use of power, or, through mediation. (If you have another idea as to how to unify people we would love to hear from you. Please email us and let’s discuss it. That could also be a subject for a future issue.)

Use of power

If there are only three vehicles for unifying people and if scapegoating is not a good strategy for unifying people, for all the reasons discussed in the Fall 2000 article, then what about *power*?

ON THE WEB ~ Visit www.susangerke.com and www.davecarey.com

Both websites carry all past issues of *Collaborations*. With Adobe Acrobat Reader 4.0 you can view or download and print the issues.

Power is neither good or bad. It is like fire or electricity, it depends on when, where and how it is used. It could be very good or it could be very bad. The judicious use of power is certainly appropriate, i.e. the right amount, at the right time, in the right circumstances.

You undoubtedly have known leaders who use, abuse, or try to use power inappropriately. At one end of the spectrum are leaders who resort to power, too quickly, too frequently. At the other end of the spectrum are leaders who almost never use power, even when it is most clearly necessary.

The over use of power has inherent problems: people become immune to it so you must always apply more and more power. The next issue is what happens when you are not there? The inability to use power when it is called for creates its own problems also: decisions aren't made; priorities aren't set, etc. The judicious use of power is most effective.

Maximization of mediation

That brings us to strategy #3 *maximization of mediation*. Let's define our terms, mediation as we are using it does not mean just an "alternative form of dispute resolution" although we don't rule that out.

We are better served to think of mediation as coming from the Latin *mediatus* 'placed in the middle.' Sometimes in the middle of disputes bringing together disputers; sometimes of bringing together different viewpoints; sometimes bringing together different personalities, different values, different priorities, different approaches, etc. So that we are able to produce in the end not a compromise, but rather a synergy!

That is the overriding objective for leaders and managers - to unify diverse people to work together effectively toward common purposes under varied and often difficult circumstances. That is why mediation is the 'heart' of leadership. It is the most effective strategy in most situations.

That does not rule out the judicious use of power, nor perhaps on very rare occasion a carefully

defined and chosen scapegoat for a specific purpose. However, mediation is almost always preferable to either the use of power or scapegoating. So we certainly agree with Mr. Gerzon. Our world calls for *mediator* leadership and *mediating* leaders.



Team Development – Now More Than Ever

We've both been consulting for many years and we find that the focus of our work goes through cycles. A focus on teams and teamwork is once again the number one request I (Susan) am seeing over the past several months.

While the reasons for the requests for me to work with teams vary, when I analyze what's behind the requests I find a commonality. Many of the teams I'm working with are currently experiencing a hiring freeze. If they let someone go from their team, they are not authorized to replace them. So, they want to "fix" the person or the team.

I'm finding the required solution is more than just a one-day team building session. It takes a combination of team sessions and one-on-one sessions with team members to work through the issues and move the team toward higher performance and team satisfaction. A key issue is often communication. I'd like to share some of the tools that have been useful in helping the teams.

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is the president of Gerke Consulting & Development and “helps people work better, together.” Susan's focus since 1989 has been in designing, customizing and implementing leadership and teamwork programs meeting the needs of executives, managers, and employees in a wide number of companies and industries.

Application of her skill and knowledge has been in facilitation, consulting, curriculum development, and coaching. Susan has developed and delivered experiential programs in the areas of *group dynamics, team basics, mentoring, and facilitation skills*. She has worked with global teams and has certified facilitators around the world to deliver management, leadership, and team offerings.



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A graduate of the United States Naval Academy, Dave is a retired Navy Captain. As a Navy pilot he was shot down and spent 5 & 1/2 years as a POW in North Vietnam. His book *The Ways We Choose: Lessons For Life From A POW's Experience* is in it's third printing.



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TEAM DEVELOPMENT—NOW MORE THAN EVER (cont'd)

Activity. I find that doing a team activity – helium stick, building a tower, the human knot, or some other activity not specific to their work shows very clearly the communication patterns and helps to identify areas of focus for improving teamwork.

Best Team Discussion. When the group discusses their best team experiences and the characteristics of those teams, they essentially create a model of teamwork. Many teams post the list of characteristics in their work area as a reminder of what they are striving for.

Understanding Differences. It's important for each individual to understand his or her personality – the how and why of what they do. Then as they share their differences with team members, strategies can be determined to bridge the differences rather than have differences be a source of conflict.

Meetings. I'm finding that people are not spending time in one-on-one meetings sharing or clarifying expectations. So, individuals are making assumptions and then are frustrated when the results they produce aren't correct.

Solving Real Problems Together. When a group has to work together to solve a real problem that affects them all they learn a great deal – about problem solving, communicating and each other. Having a facilitator for that problem solving is critical so that new, positive ways of communicating and working together can be emphasized.