



LEADERSHIP BY EXAMPLE

by Frances Hesselbein

Twenty years ago, when the Peter Drucker Foundation for Nonprofit Management was founded, an exuberant Peter Drucker led the way toward an adventure in significance. The Foundation, now the Leader to Leader Institute, continues to be faithful to Peter and his philosophy. Only the name has changed.

In November 2001, Peter Drucker wrote “A Survey of the Near Future: The Next Society” in *The Economist*. The article was full of Peter’s wisdom, such as “I never predict. I simply look out the window and see what is visible but not yet seen.”

The most important observation in the article is one I’ve been carrying around with me for about ten years. It is on change agents:

To survive and succeed, every organization will have to turn itself into a change agent. The most effective way to manage change successfully is to create it. But experience has shown that grafting innovation on to a traditional enterprise does not work. The enterprise has to become a change agent. This requires the organized abandonment of things that have been shown to be unsuccessful, and the organized and continuous improvement of every product, service, and process within the enterprise (which the Japanese call *kaizen*). It requires the exploitation of successes, especially unexpected and unplanned-for ones, and it requires systematic innovation. The point of becoming a change agent is that it changes the mind-set of the entire organization. Instead of seeing change as a threat, its people will come to consider it as an opportunity.

“Changing the mind-set of the organization” continues to be the enormous opportunity (not challenge), and innovation and planned abandonment are even more urgently required.

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It is amazing and gratifying that even at the close of Peter’s 100th birthday celebration all over the world, his wisdom and his philosophy are bringing new understanding to leaders of “the next society.”

I met Peter Drucker in 1981, when I was CEO of the Girl Scouts of the U.S.A., and for the next eight years, he gave us two or three days of his time each year and made an enormous and positive impact upon our work and success.

The next year, 1982, a young man from California walked into my Girl Scouts office at 830 Third Avenue in New York with a gift. Marshall Goldsmith had developed a 360° feedback process and wanted to give it to our organization. He would use it with my management team and me; he would help train facilitators and we would move Marshall’s 360° feedback across the organization. It fit perfectly with our corporate management plan for the future, and we began our second adventure with a great innovator.

I left the Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. on January 31, 1990, and my last year was the most exuberant of my 13 years with the best organization and best people in the world. Six weeks later, I found myself the president and CEO of the new Peter F. Drucker Foundation for Nonprofit Management, with Peter as the honorary chairman and Marshall Goldsmith as a member of the board.

Leadership on the World Wide Web

We are deep in webinar excitement. Now if you had suggested a “global webinar” in 1990, the reply would have been, “global yes, but webinar?” Not so today. On August 10, 752 participants from 37 countries and over 400 companies and organizations took part in the “Leadership by Example: A Conversation with Frances Hesselbein” webinar, the online global leadership gathering and conversation in which I was the speaker. From early on in the event, participants were asking questions, sharing thoughts on our virtual walls, and reflecting on the experience itself, and the responses continue to come in, with requests for repeat or follow-up global webinars.

A few comments about our webinar:

“This was an extremely beneficial experience. It was not only informative, it was a dynamic way to interface with the content of what you shared. Being part of a global session brought with it an uncommon synergy or coherence that seems to me to be quite a phenomenon in itself. Intuitively, I felt an exceptional connection, which I had not expected. What a brilliant use of media! Thank you for the effort put into this event.”

“Thank you for the very inspiring conference this evening. I believe you mentioned a quote from one of the participants which started with the invisible red line . . . It was in connection to leaders and the fact that his invisible red line never breaks . . . I firmly believe that we all eventually will connect with those who we are destined to meet during our journeys.”

“I want to thank you for an engaging and thought provoking webinar today. It was truly a great experience. I watched and listened to it with a few members of my new leadership team and we then had some good dialogue on their ideas around the key messages. It was a small (but important) step in helping us become a stronger and more cohesive team. Thank you for the opportunity.”

*Access “Leadership by
Example: A Conversation
with Frances Hesselbein”
at www.leadertoleader.org.*

The “Leadership by Example” webinar was designed and produced by Debbe Kennedy, the founder of the Global Dialogue Center, as her contribution to moving our work around the world, a great gift to leaders everywhere. I found it intriguing that the first two countries to sign on were Pakistan and Kenya; 35 others followed. Debbe and I decided that rather than charging the usual \$8 or \$10 per person, there would be no charge, so that money would not limit participation by leaders in some countries and some groups. To have so many organizations sign on, some with multiple sites, was gratifying, and equally gratifying were the responses coming during the webinar and in the open half-hour that followed. It was so successful that now leaders are asking, “What’s next?”

Readers can access the “Leadership by Example: A Conversation with Frances Hesselbein” webinar at our Web site: www.leadertoleader.org.

Celebrating Our Shared Journey

As I write this in late September, the Leader to Leader Institute’s calendar for the balance of 2010 has two celebrations. On October 11, Marshall Goldsmith, one of the world’s greatest executive coaches and the author of *Mojo: How to Get It, How to Keep It, How to Get It Back If You Lose It*, and a new book to come, will receive the Leader to Leader Institute’s fifth “The Leader of the

Future Award” in New York City. Alan Mulally, president of Ford Motor Company, was our first awardee in 2006, followed by Andrea Jung, president and CEO of Avon Products, in 2007; A. G. Lafley, recently retired chairman of the board, president, and chief executive officer of Procter & Gamble, in 2008; and General Eric K. Shinseki (U.S. Army Retired), now the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in 2009.

The final Leader to Leader Institute celebration of 2010 will be our annual Holiday Reception on December 16 on Mutual of America’s wonderful 35th floor in New York City. This year in a small gift bag for each guest will be an early copy of my own book *My Life in Leadership: The Journey and Lessons Learned Along the Way* (official publication date January).

In just two days, Alan Mulally, our first “Leader of the Future” awardee, will go to West Point with me to engage cadets in a leadership dialogue. I wish you could be there to appreciate the response of these cadets to a great, principled, ethical, and incredibly successful corporate leader, a model for us all; Alan’s four “Ford Goals” and West Point’s “Duty, Honor, Country” will get along very well.

I will continue to be at West Point monthly until my two-year appointment to the Class of ’51 Chair for the Study of Leadership ends in May 2011. Each time I meet with a class of cadets, I bring with me a great thought leader and the two of us begin the dialogue. Then the cadets dive into the dialogue in the most profound and stimulating way. Their questions and comments will give Alan Mulally a new kind of en-

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ergy. I'll share it. And then, at lunchtime in that great hall, 4,400 cadets and faculty will give the president and CEO of Ford Motor Company an appreciative, high-volume welcome he will never forget and always cherish. They too will remember the day a corporate leadership icon traveled to West Point, honored to join the newest members of that "long gray line."

There is a long and powerful list of fellow travelers who have shared our journey—400 who have written for our books and *Leader to Leader* journal, spoken at our conferences, served on our board, and traveled with me when we went abroad to China, Poland, Korea, and South Africa. Whenever they get the call, they respond. The generosity of these friends of the foundation/institute is what has enabled us to end our 20th year with exuberance and great optimism. There are not only books, journals, conferences, seminars, and monographs, but also the whole new world of the Internet—the global webinars, the Innovation of the Week, and a great Web site of the future. Please visit it.

Peter told us in 2001 about the next society. Today, ten years later, we look ahead at this generation's "next

society." Global webinars are only the beginning. Together we will chart the new journey to significance.

If the above sounds a little "bookish," I guess it's only natural for us now that we are publishing our 28th book. Our books have now been published in 30 languages. We'll have a special celebration when we hit "30 books in 30 languages"! You will be part of it.

Our 20th anniversary brings back years, experiences, and dreams shared with fellow travelers. Thank you for sharing our Drucker Foundation/Leader to Leader to Institute journey. Now for the next 20!

Frances Hesselbein is editor-in-chief of Leader to Leader, founding president of the Drucker Foundation, president and CEO of the Leader to Leader Institute, and former chief executive officer of the Girl Scouts of the U.S.A.