NANO TOOLS FOR LEADERS®

AUTHENTICITY: IT BEGINS WITH YOUR LEADERSHIP PHILOSOPHY

Nano Tools for Leaders® are fast, effective leadership tools that you can learn and start using in less than 15 minutes — with the potential to significantly impact your success as a leader and the engagement and productivity of the people you lead.

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THE GOAL:

Become a more authentic leader by identifying and leading with your core beliefs and values.

NANO TOOL:

The role of authenticity in leadership has been explored and extolled for over a decade. Those who can successfully merge their personal identity with their role in the organization, who are more transparent and more open about themselves, have been shown to achieve better results (Luthans & Avolio, 2003) (George, 2003). These leaders evoke greater trust and elicit better performance and outcomes from their teams. Job satisfaction and retention rates as well as levels of commitment to the organization are also positively impacted.

But to lead authentically, leaders must first understand who they are, where they have been, and how key events and people in their lives inform who they are today. Starting with a guided self-reflection on key "crucible" experiences, the creation of a leadership philosophy becomes an opportunity to identify and articulate your point of view on leadership; your assumptions and deeply held beliefs about people, leader-follower relationships, and your purpose as a leader; and how you intend to accomplish your mission through and with people. The process of developing a leadership philosophy also provides an opportunity to clarify mutual expectations for leadership with the team.

Your crucible experiences, the ones that have had the most profound impact, are the foundation of your leadership philosophy, helping listeners connect and identify emotionally with you. They also inform the four components of your leader philosophy that can help you communicate your values, style, and preferences across your organization and team, and to initiate a conversation about "how we lead together" across the team.

HOW COMPANIES USE IT:

Several executives from Morgan Stanley use this process to allow their teams to express their desired leadership climate and culture. In one case, the leader presented a prepared Leadership Philosophy to his team. In the second case, the

leader proposed that the team build a team philosophy from scratch. In both cases, the results were powerful and immediate. Team members felt included in the process, and the associated motivation led to performance improvement such as increases in initiative, clearer communication across the team including clarity around mutual expectations, and faster decision-making. The executives' direct reports "cascaded" the Leadership Philosophy down the organization to other teams to achieve clarity of purpose and to build consensus regarding their joint purpose, desired organizational culture, and commitment to stakeholders and to the company as a whole.

ACTION STEPS:

1. **Identify the experiences and events that have shaped you** both as a person and as a leader. Using the Leader Journey Line [Vertical axis: emotional energy (low to high); horizontal axis: time], consider the meaningful events (both good and bad) in your life and chart them.

2. **Establish your top three "developmental points"** (two lows and one high). For each, clarify the impact of the event on your personality, values, or leadership style. What did each event teach you? How will you behave differently as a leader because of it?

3. **Use those key findings to develop your leadership philosophy:**
   A. **Identify your sense of purpose:** Ask, "Why do I lead others? What are my goals as a leader? What do I want to help others accomplish?"
   B. **Articulate your core values:** What is so important to you that it influences every decision? It might be, for example, honesty, integrity, trust, diligence? List three or four that everyone you work with should know.
   C. **Create clear expectations:** What should team members expect from you, and what do you expect from them? How can they expect the team to work as a whole, and what are their roles within it? This portion reflects "how we want to lead and work together" and involves authority, accountability, and support.
   D. **Develop Critical Leader Agenda:** A short-term, functional agenda should make clear immediate team or leader objectives for the next several months. How can I develop and extend leadership capabilities throughout my team? How can I clarify our collective purpose and my leader intent? What communication and actions are necessary to support the desired climate that we've articulated? What developmental activities should I seek for myself?

4. **Schedule a meeting with your team** to discuss your leadership philosophy, or ask each team member to create their own, then meet to build consensus on the way leadership will work on your team.

5. **Once a month, reflect on your leadership philosophy,** making sure each of your daily decisions and actions is fully aligned with it; bring your team together to check progress on building the desired leadership climate and culture. This meeting can take the form of the After Action Review, where team members come together to discuss progress toward the ideal climate expressed in the leadership philosophy.

SHARE YOUR BEST PRACTICES:

Do you have a best practice for developing a leadership philosophy? If so, please share it on our blog at Wharton's Center for Leadership and Change Management. http://whartonleadership.wordpress.com/

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- "Connect, Then Lead,"Amy J.C. Cuddy, Matthew Kohut, and John Neffinger. *Harvard Business Review*, July-August 2013. Provides practical strategies based on research in behavioral economics, social psychology, and other disciplines, for leaders to combine strength with warmth to build genuine connections with those they lead.

- "What's Your Story?" A Life-stories Approach to Authentic Leadership Development," Boas Shamir, Galit Eilamb, *The Leadership Quarterly*, Volume 16, Issue 3, June 2005, 395–417. Offers a life-story approach to the development of authentic leaders and argues that authentic leadership rests heavily on the self-relevant meanings the leader attaches to his or her life experiences.

- Todd Henshaw teaches in Wharton Executive Education's *Creating and Leading High-Performing Teams* and *High-Potential Leaders: Accelerating Your Impact*

ABOUT NANO TOOLS:

Nano Tools for Leaders® was conceived and developed by Deb Giffen, MCC, Director of Innovative Learning Solutions at Wharton Executive Education. It is jointly sponsored by Wharton Executive Education and Wharton's Center for Leadership and Change Management, Wharton Professor of Management Michael Useem, Director. Nano Tools' Academic Director is John Paul MacDuffie, Wharton Associate Professor of Management, and Director of the Program on Vehicle and Mobility Innovation (PVMI) at Wharton's Mack Institute for Innovation Management.