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THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE OF SERVICE QUALITY

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At the outset it is very important to acknowledge that services can vary in quality and that it is quite possible to influence it for good and bad. The very fact that service quality isn't a fixed reality but rather one that can be improved is important to consider. Its nature is malleable and this gives those that care about quality the chance to influence it for the better. Further, it suggests that we don't necessarily have to settle for inferior service, providing we've made the investments to have it improved. It also means that in some instances, it may be possible for exceptional levels of quality to be achieved even in times in which poor service quality is the norm.

Quality generally refers to something done by human beings at a very high level of excellence, oftentimes in the sense of works of perfection as being distinctive from inferior mediocre performance. This is the sense in which quality will be used here.

There is another sense of 'quality' as being a continuum from very poor to excellent. All stages of the continuum are part of 'quality' in that they all express some level of attainment of quality - even if in the inferior ranges. This sense is not helpful if what one wants to concentrate on is the 'best' effort as distinct from all efforts.

Quality can also be a sustained phenomena that accumulates its virtue precisely by enduring in its meritorious distinctiveness within the passage of time. It would be reflected in a track record of interlinked instances of individual excellence combining with other ones across time. Conceivably these may not be accidental at all but are shaped repeatedly by the hands of those whose task it is to ensure a good outcome. If such persons fail to assure the intended quality then something that might have been excellent will not become so.

Service quality can decline even in circumstances where it had consistently been above average. This could also mean that service quality is low despite the fact that it needn't be. Since quality can be influenced either positively or negatively, it matters a great deal whether people are trying to influence it for the better. One of the most decisive of the possible influences on quality is leadership.

Nothing of consequence can be achieved in any human activity without a measure of leadership being required to ensure that things turn out well. While people in human services often see

themselves as somehow apart from other walks in life, a more accurate sense is that the essential human condition is much the same in human services as anywhere else. Additionally, we are much the same today as we have been down through the ages. In this we share much with other ages in our own struggles for quality and leadership.

The temptation may be to see these challenges in only their highly modernized versions and thus make the questions of quality and leadership much too hostage to the current culture of human service. A more cautious approach would be to anchor these more to what quality and leadership have asked of human beings across many times and places and in the many facets of human life in which these are universally relevant concerns.

Leadership, as we use the term today, does not have quite as encompassing a lineage as does quality. Few languages outside of English have a comparable term and, in English itself, the term's current meanings only crystallized in the latter half of this century. The early concept of 'leader' usually indicated a formal role whereas today 'leadership' typically refers to the capacity of some people to lead. This does not imply that leadership is or has been unimportant in bringing about quality but rather that we have our own particular preoccupations about it in this brief period of the late twentieth century. In any case, it is worthwhile to link these two concerns and try to discern how these might or might not make any difference for the many millions of people now dependent on modern human service systems.

a) Quality as an Internalized Ethic

There is no particular reason to do anything of quality unless one seeks to shape things so that something above average can result. This 'will to quality' thereby moves from being a goal to a commitment. A commitment is the undertaking of an obligation in which one will risk not measuring up to a high standard. Achieving quality means living with the risk of doing poorly. On the other hand, quality cannot be achieved merely by intentions as, at some point, one will have to struggle to demonstrate excellence. This would explain why 'quality talk' is so universally insufficient as a response to the deeper challenges of achieving excellence. Words are not deeds. For leaders the task becomes one of both calling for and exemplifying a consistent commitment to quality in oneself and others, such that it becomes a part of who people are - that is, an ethical foundation in their identity. For instance, one cannot achieve an attitude of respect for clients by merely mouthing respectful things. The test of genuineness will require that you mean what you say and this is recognized as tangibly a part of who you are. An ethic that is not internalized is not a commitment but rather a pose. Thus for leaders the task becomes one of getting people (including themselves) to authentically care about quality and then to continuously challenge

themselves to do something about it. Put in another way, quality begins inside people and radiates outward.

Less obvious may be the fact that it is impossible to achieve a quality outcome without first resolving within oneself the will and intention to do a superior job of things. Even with such questions resolved at the outset it is quite realistic to expect that the commitment to excel will be tested repeatedly by the disciplines inherent in achieving excellence. Each trial in its own way forces a recurring recommitment to quality at each step in the task. Whenever one lets one's commitment to excellence lapse quality inevitably will decline. Thus the 'outer' manifestations of quality e.g. performance are a mirror of the 'inner' challenge of quality.

b) Quality Derives Fundamentally From People, Not From Organizations, Laws or Systems

The current management ethos about quality is that it is something that comes to clients (or customers) via organizations. The difficulty with this premise is that it ignores the commonly cited observation that organizations are only as good as the people in them. Thus the more fundamental origin of quality is 'persons', both in their personal and collective sense. Without good people it is very doubtful that you can get good results. Axiomatically, it is entirely predictable that quality will utterly mirror the strengths and weaknesses of the people involved. Organizations and other structures do profoundly influence people but in the end the raw essence of quality lies in the characters of these who are involved. One cannot draw good results from poor character as good does not derive from its absence.

To suggest that organizations, laws, systems and other such structures govern human conduct is to both grossly overstate their influence and to ignore the way human beings actually interact with systems. In the first instance 'systems' constitute frameworks which channel human activity but cannot utterly control it. In the second instance human beings show both a startling capacity to render even elegantly logical systems dysfunctional as well as a genuine innovativeness in making sense of things even in the face of incoherent systems. Thus it is a far more cautious view to see the eventual dependence of systems on people even if this sensibility is ignored in the paradigm of technocratic utilitarianism.

For leaders, the initial challenge becomes the recruitment of the 'right' people and the redirection or substitution of those less suited. It means the deployment of people where they can do the most good and providing the ongoing sustenance to them to meet the demands of achieving quality. These tasks alone are formidable, so it should give an inkling of the deeper costs to leaders if they embrace the painfully taxing ambition of quality. Superior quality will only derive

from people doing a superior job.

C)Achieving Excellence is Difficult and Rare

There seems to exist in all of us a wish to make things easier. This leaves us vulnerable to trying to enact this wish through short cuts, quick fixes and other subterfuges. The reality is that achieving anything of quality is precisely the opposite of easy. There is no doubt that many people can create the appearance that quality has been achieved easily. This will not in the end be proven to have been the true case. Quality will always ask something of human beings and will yield its benefits only to the extent that each gain has been precisely earned. One can't realistically expect to be at the top of one's field without paying the price of proving oneself again and again. This has always been true and will continue to be so even if we live in foolish times. In the end substance matters in quality.

Excellence will be increasingly more difficult to achieve as one increases the standard. Consequently fewer and fewer people will reach that standard as the degree of quality heightens. Thus in most things, including human services, the average level of quality can be expected to be routinely ordinary or worse and only infrequently remarkable or outstanding. It is no mistake that most quality assurance schemes are minimal standards oriented since this is much more consistent with the 'regression to the mean' tendencies that derive from human nature. In this, quality assurance is actually quality avoidance, since most 'QA' strategies virtually ignore the question of what an optimal service could or should look like in favor of asking what is minimally acceptable.

For leaders there is necessarily a requirement that there be no underestimation of what it really takes to get people to excel on any kind of sustained basis. Quality can be addressed partly by getting people to excel and partly by getting people accustomed to a more exacting standard, such that quality is not a foreign struggle to them. Humility in the face of the profound limitations in achieving excellence is in no way an impediment to cultivating a proper respect and desire for quality. In fact, it is doubtful that human beings can sustain any exacting task without both a realistic idealism and a generous grasp of what it takes to do something authentically notable. It is revealing that so many people who speak and write about quality act as if quality achievement was merely a matter of adopting the right outlook. While outlook does matter there are indeed further substantial costs in attaining authentic quality that should not be underestimated as this will lead to a serious lack of realism. It has never been true, nor will it ever be true, that exceptional accomplishments can be acquired without struggle, commitment and difficulty. It cheapens the meaning of 'excellence' to suggest that it asks nothing of us before delivering its bounty.

Excellence must be earned each and every day, as has been known since ancient times in the moral recognition that one is entitled only to that which one has contributed to. One of the more misleading themes of our disoriented age is that one can have it all without somehow paying one's way. How can one serve people with distinction if one has not acknowledged the immense difficulty of what it takes to consistently understand, assist and enable people? If it were so easy why is it that the clients of so many of our services are living lives that are far less than either they or their service providers would hope for? What is it that we believe we have added to the process of service that justifies a claim of excellence?

The good news in this is that superior quality in service is realistically attainable for those leaders in service, at whatever level, who both engage the level of difficulty involved and recognize that each step towards improvement will ask something before giving way. If people and organizations can be enabled to meet this price then there can be the resultant confidence that progress is feasible. Further, it can also be expected that shallow, superficial and deceptively easy versions of quality will eventually yield their inevitable fruits of disappointment and emptiness. Genuine leadership, in this regard, may be as much concerned with discernment as to what is true quality as it is with paying the daily price for this insight.

d) What Is Said To Be Quality in Human Service May Not Necessarily Be Centered On The Service User

It is important to recognize that we are all free to call anything we want 'quality'. As in ancient times much is passed off as quality, which is actually inferior. We recognize this ancient challenge in the enduring use of Latin terms such as 'caveat emptor', i.e. let the buyer beware. Unfortunately foolishness, gullibility and an inability to discern quality are ever present in all of us at one time or another. This leaves us vulnerable to those who can present themselves as excellent whether or not there is any evidence for their claims.

The difficulty goes deeper than merely discerning what is salesmanship, to the underlying reality that there are many competing ideas of what quality might be. Some of these may be as primitive as believing that a clean service setting reflects a superior service, to a more sophisticated naivete that increasing the number of credentialled professionals somehow ensures that the service user will be treated better. Whatever the singular element of service quality cited, the fact remains that one's perception of service quality functions for most people as their standard. Consequently, quality in service can be whatever people want it to be.

A crucial question then becomes whether what people see as quality has anything to do with the service users' experience of service. If a service is genuinely good then surely it must be of

distinctive benefit to the person served. This assumption requires of all service that it be beneficial to the person served, at least insofar that such benefits are realistically feasible. It is this assumption that encourages many people to look at service user outcomes as a clue to whether authentic service has been rendered. Even so, many people might nonetheless still be content to look at non-service user factors as being as good as client outcome measures. Conceivably these non service user factors could include financial control, documentation of policies and practices, adherence to regulations, minimal standards, competitive unit costs, administrative performance and so on. Needless to say, these factors typically do not relate to client outcomes as much as they do organizational conformity and stability. Even so, in some minds, the dependable presence of service maybe more valued than whether it aids the service user's life. In some extreme instances, services have been evaluated without any inquiry whatsoever into whether the service user is better off - including having the evaluators fail to meet the persons served.

The dilemma is not resolved simply by adopting some measure of service user 'outcomes' since these 'outcomes' may themselves be a poor measure of whether service(s) has authentically benefited the person. For instance, client satisfaction surveys are notoriously undependable as a gauge of service effectiveness, as are 'units of service received' as a measure of program relevance. Yet these are both likely to be called 'outcomes'. Still, the act of focusing on the people served at the expense of an overconcentration on disembodied and abstract organizational performance measures is nevertheless a good safeguard against the possibility of ignoring the life of the person served as the crucial test of service quality. Service leaders must direct their energies to establishing some manner of service that is unmistakably focused on the people served. This is not as easy as one might imagine.

e) Quality in Service Must Relate to What is Good for People

There are many people in this era whose conditioning has led them to believe that all human problems are 'technical' in nature and therefore they needn't consider what used to be called 'metaphysics'. While this preference can be maintained in most settings it does not at all serve as a convincing rationale for avoiding the values questions involved in ascertaining whether a given human being is indeed 'better off'. While empiricism is helpful in testing and measuring matters, it gives little guidance ultimately on what is the 'good' that should be measured. For this, we must turn to values.

It is simply not practical for insightful service leaders to ultimately dodge the question of values, since all manner of service is guided by values whether they are acknowledged or not. Further, promulgation of the supposedly 'right' values is not in itself anything more than verbal activity since

ultimately such talk can easily be contrasted with what the service user actually experiences. While a given service leader may inevitably fool some people, the test of values congruity will eventually sort out fact from fiction. Inevitably, a meritorious service leader must ultimately, consciously and with commitment, choose values that benefit the person served or there will be no benefit. Values do relate to what is good for people even if this fact gets obscured.

This can be seen in those many instances in everyday life where children are neglected because adults do not take responsibility for the child's eventual well being. Their lack of value for the child's potential inevitably shows itself in the wasting of the child's life. Adults with a different set of values vis-a-vis such a child might indeed do more 'good' for the child by seeing more clearly their personal responsibility in how the child grows up. We can always say that values are merely abstractions but this does not make them so.

It is nonetheless very difficult to choose and adhere to positive values quite apart from getting others to see the merit of embracing them. Yet this is only a part of the difficulty of providing leadership on service quality. Even so, a committed leader must both advance and defend a vision of superior service quality or they risk both not standing for anything and supporting a mediocre sense of what's possible. What makes this whole aspect of value focussed leadership even more costly is that while values can unite people they can also divide them, thereby undermining the essential unity of purpose and commitment necessary for people to act as one. It is very doubtful that any manner of excellence can be achieved without agreement on purposes, yet it is this very agreement that is so elusive. Yet, clearly there are service leaders who have mounted a sufficient degree of consensus to ensure that those they serve gain the benefits that are possible even in the face of many whom adamantly oppose them. Under such circumstances it would be logical to conclude that productive values leadership is possible even in the face of adversity. Even so, it will always remain difficult to be sure that the values embraced are indeed good in the lives of the people served. It is very easy to lose one's way especially if the test of one's fidelity to those served is weak or absent.

f) Service Quality as One Person at a Time

Service quality is simultaneously multidimensional and its sub-elements differently ordered given the specific needs of each person served. Human beings rarely need just one thing in order to have their lives function optimally. More typically they need a variety of things in quite differing orders of priority. For instance, there might be many things that people share in their personal sense of what constitutes a good home life for themselves, but it is very unlikely that the person-by-person ordering of importance of these is distinguishable in the abstract. More commonly there is individual variation as to how each person might prioritize the many variables of

quality in their home life.

For a service leader the challenge is to recognize that service quality has many facets that have to be managed simultaneously but also managed with direct relevance to the greater and lesser needs of each unique person served. In concrete terms this argues against 'pre-packaged' or standardized service and service outcomes since, by definition, outcomes must ultimately be tailored to the variable needs and priorities of the persons served. With this in mind it is not hard to see why the very best services are the ones that derive from who the people served actually are, rather than from generalized assumptions about them, i.e. overly standardized service models and practices.

If one takes this insight to its logical implications it becomes clear that it is not possible to discern whether a service is good for a given person except by delving deeply enough into who that person is and what it is they actually need to enhance their life. While some checklists of possible elements of quality could be utilized as a starting point for analysis, these, in the end, can only be ordered into relative priority in reference to a given person. Even the evaluation of services by standardized client outcomes may miss the point since these are, at best, global and reductionist starting points, since the true worth of a service is directly tied to its relevant address of a given person's needs.

What at one time was called the individualisation of service is an instructive example as to how the person served can eventually be omitted from influencing his or her service design and delivery. Many people can undoubtedly recall numerous examples of service agencies attempting to install some measure of individualized planning, service delivery and even funding. Commonly this has been motivated by a quite genuine concern that the wishes and needs of individuals not be overlooked. In practice, however, we rapidly witnessed the standardization of procedures for even this individualization. In many cases the standardization went well beyond the codifying of outlook and procedure to the installation of mandatory bureaucratic rituals. It is ironic that this 'so-called' individualized bureaucratic process has been foisted upon people for their own good, irrespective of whether they even want or need such mechanisms. We are always at risk of providing service to people in such a way that they no longer matter.

The telling point in this previous example is that while the individual was ostensibly the center of attention, the practices for actually dealing with the person did not originate with the persons served but with the hunger of people and systems for stepwise methodologies or recipes. This same pattern of 'ignoring the person in order to save them' is already evident in the newest generation of so called 'person centered' methodologies. Again, the nominal intention is to make the

person the decisive influence, yet in practice, honesty would require the acknowledgement that the needs of other more influential parties are at work.

The ability of people and agencies to submit to the needs and priorities of those they serve is clearly limited. Even with honorable intentions it is very easy for service providers to lose sight of those they serve, even if at times, they are genuinely guided by the persons they are supposed to serve. This risk of estrangement has a certain inevitability to it since it is very unlikely that most people could ever entirely maintain their fidelity unerringly to all of those they serve. The implication is clear that 'person centeredness' is a capacity that needs constant attention or even devotion in order to amount to anything of consequence. In this way it is an incessant daily requirement of good service that must repeatedly be earned and defended. Also it is not a dichotomous variable but rather a continuum from the ordinary to the superb that will be achieved despite the presence of competing pressures and limitations.

The task for service providers and in particular, their leaders, is to constantly reassert that the priority for personal and organizational attention is focussed on the lives of those served. While on one level this is a value that needs adoption and reinforcement - on a practice level it means constantly referring back to what life is like or could be like for the people served and judging all other matters against their relevance to this end point. It would not be easy to do this even if people were able to be readily understood and their needs addressed in a straightforward way, yet most human beings are typically more complex than this. 'Being there' for any group of human beings is never going to be anything but a challenge, yet it is this struggle that leaders must burden themselves with if progress is to be made.

g) The Inherent Richness of 'Ordinary Lives' As a Criteria for Service Quality

One of the great tragedies of human service has been the times in which we have dehumanized and degraded the people we were supposed to serve and honor. While much that is harmful has been done through misguided actions and ignorance we need to recognize those elements of mistreatment which derive from the poverty of our vision for other people. If we cannot see the potential in the lives of the people being served it invariably will mean that we won't reach for it. Excellence normally is only attained after striving for it, so the absence of a compelling vision of human possibility greatly endangers this necessary challenge for us to excel.

What has made this field memorable has been those occasions when it helped to restore to people the humanity that their world had denied them. We did not simply get up one morning and do this

on a whim. On the contrary, we were relentlessly challenged in this direction by the staggering contrast between how those we were to serve were forced to live and how most people in our community preferred to live. To their credit, many people in service roles were morally disturbed by the possibility that they were contributing to the degradation of others and sought ways to set things right. Even so, this aim would still not have been fruitful if it were not for the adoption by this field of the commitment that its clients were entitled, as human beings, to the richness of life available to most so called ordinary citizens.

This was not a mundane matter merely of making available to people the many possibilities of normal lives in the community but something much more far-reaching. It was a commitment that we would respect and honor their humanity by insisting that they be treated as well or even better than their fellow citizens. Were it not for the rigorous adherence by many to this moral foundation, it is doubtful that we would still be pushing forward on the agenda of deepening the possibilities inherent in seeing people as being essentially like all other people, leading their lives as do other people and having access, like all other people, to the good things in life.

We were brought to such revolutionary commitments by the principle of normalization and then social role valorization which challenged us to both see the harm of social devaluation but also the great healing power of enabling people to have the kinds of lives that we often mistakenly think of as 'ordinary' or 'normal'. Since we have adopted this standard of striving to enable people to have the fullness of community life, we have seen breakthroughs in virtually every aspect of the lives of the people this field serves. Our sense of what constitutes quality seems to have been inexorably extended upward year after year with the fruits of such an expansion amply enriching the lives of those touched by such higher aspirations.

It is noteworthy that many people see 'quality' as being the product of various clinical processes, treatments or programs, i.e. quality equals clinical methods being pursued optimally. Such a view contrasts sharply with those who see the ultimate outcome needing to be better lives not better programs. What will have been gained, after all, if you have a good program but no life? In this way good 'service' must be in support of enriched 'ordinary' lives perhaps even a life without clienthood.

Even with a 'pro forma' adherence to the good of the pursuit of ordinary lives in community, it is easy to be fooled into thinking that minor progress on this goal is the same as great progress. In community living it is immensely easy to make available to people the most marginal, depleted and degraded versions of what is possible in normal life. Interestingly, the persons being served are typically so lacking in influence that they might not ever get the chance to challenge our rhetoric

and complacency about inferior community living. Anyone who can say that the challenge of social role valorization is passe simply has not looked at the reality of the lives of people needing service in our communities today. Much is missing in their lives that should concern us.

It is this threat of the dominance of an impoverished version of community living that leaders in the field must now address. If we do not continue to push the boundaries of what is possible within the framework of valued social roles, we risk becoming the agents of a new community centered degradation every bit as pernicious as the ones we already have witnessed. We should be under no illusions that we can cheat people out of quality in community living and expect at the same time to think we have respected the humanity of those who we are supposed to serve. Many people may be tempted to think that cutting corners on what we mean by quality community living will go unnoticed. This would be unwise, as the legacy of this field is amply evident in the actual lives of the people served, for those who have the interest to look into such matters. We should recognize that we are only as good as the goodness they get to live. We will surely need leaders who unremittingly bring us back to such realizations.

h) The Struggle for Quality Competes with Other Necessities and Vested Interests

It may not be obvious to many people but human services are steeped in vested interests of both legitimate and illegitimate sorts. These interests compete for influence over the affairs of services and are incessantly factors in all matters both big and small. Such interests are rarely equal relative to each other and will often be found deep in conflict with each other. Service users may actually be poorly positioned to influence services, given the many (more) powerful interests at work. It should not be surprising then that those who must rely on services are often the least able to shape what services are and thus become hostage to the will and priorities of others who hold more influence. If service users are to benefit from services then a great deal will rest upon the values, commitments and alignment of interests of various people and groups who are normally more powerful than service users and will likely remain so. If their disproportionate power is used for good then much of value can be gained.

Leaders at all levels of service can help to cancel out much of what might harm people who rely on services as well as advance the kinds of things that might further benefit them. We repeatedly witness the difference good (moral) leadership can make and we stagger under the awesome costs of poor leadership. Thus it matters whether leaders commit themselves to service quality as it provides the huge advantage of creating a political, economic and moral agenda that both favors service users and challenges the commitments of those with greater influence.

The agenda of service quality will never be the sole preoccupation of service leaders as there are many other matters that also require their attention. Service quality must compete with other necessities and will therefore need to be reinforced and reasserted as a priority by concerned leaders. In most cases leaders will need to wade through innumerable other matters even as they hope to preserve the time and energy to give service quality the concentration it needs. This tension underlines the importance of having service leaders who do not let themselves lose sight of what life is like for the people they serve.

Service leaders must also recognize that getting to service quality means building service quality into the shared purposes and vision of the many interests at work in services. Many might mistakenly assume that vested interests will inevitably be selfish interests. This needn't be the case at all as it's quite possible for people and groups to align themselves with the service users' interests. On the other hand, it would be unwise to leave the matter to chance given the competing pressures that must be faced. It's for this reason that the role of committed leaders building momentum towards service quality is so crucial. Without people bringing the focus back on the people served, there is a great risk of their needs being overlooked. Also, since achieving service quality is so difficult the will to attempt it must be constantly renewed.

1) Service Quality Is Not Assured Simply By Spending Money

While it is true that you get what you pay for, it's also quite possible to pay a lot and get very little back. If it were not so, then one could assume a simple correlation between price and benefit with the latter rising or lowering with price. Such an assumption is misguided since it falsely pre-supposes that any human being or agency already has what it takes for quality and secondly that such persons or bodies will somehow 'release' quality in proportion to the funds assigned. Even a naive person could quickly appreciate that funds could be squandered if they are given to people who lack the substance to use them well.

Quality does not derive from money but rather from people. For good people in human service, the motivation and ability to do exceptional work on behalf of those they serve is not typically driven by money but rather from a sense of mission, commitment and values. Most of these people will 'give' the same kind of effort irrespective of the level of payment and thus do not 'hold back' quality until sufficient payment induces its release. One could assume that most of these people would be offended by the suggestion that the reason they provide good service to people is because they are induced to do so by increased payments. In essence, the simple correlational model is a false depiction of what's really at work in excellent service.

Sometimes the things that people really need cannot be bought in any case. This might include security, love, relationships, hope, community and other such things which are the gifts human beings give to each other rather than sell to each other. Acquiring valued social roles within community life is not equivalent to obtaining a 'product', though its commodification is verbally achievable as can be seen by recent efforts to linguistically commercialize human services, e.g. referring to service users as customers, referring to services as 'products', agencies as 'businesses' etc.

Service requires expenditures and investments in supporting people to undertake the task of treating people well but the essence of quality will not derive from the amounts spent. On the contrary, the key question will be whether money was spent on the right things. The answer to the question of what is the right thing to spend money on must derive from a respect for the human possibilities and needs present in those who must rely on services. These, in turn, need to be interpreted through and guided by positive values. In the end, there will always be limits on both the money available to sustain good service and on the capabilities of people and organizations to 'get things right' for people. Good leadership clearly has to be about focusing whatever resources are available on getting the people served the best that such limited human and other resources can provide. If leaders do not have the wisdom to choose the right directions, no amount of additional money will help. Money is only as good as how it's used on behalf of people.

J) It Is Possible To Bring Out The Good In People

As has been said earlier, quality is an outgrowth of who people are. If quality is present and sought by a given person then it suffuses their outlook and conduct. Even where a substantial degree of quality has already been attained by people it is possible to encourage even better. People are susceptible to being influenced and it is crucial that those who are asked to serve be given favorable conditions for doing so. A service leader will inevitably have to serve through and with others and it is highly important that they approach this task with respect for what's involved.

Leaders needs to begin by first recognizing that they can only achieve their aims by establishing some manner of cooperation with the will of those who chose to serve. This is best obtained through the forging of common values, purpose and mission such that the efforts of people are united rather than scattered. Without the engagement of people's collective will it is not possible to excel. People will do extraordinary things if they can be convinced of their importance. The challenge of leaders is to build this sense of the importance of good service.

It may surprise many people that not all human motivations relate to self-interest. Often people can be deeply called to put aside their own interests in favor of the needs of others. In fact, this may be the motivation that initially attracted many persons into human service. If we only speak to people of their narrow selfish interests is it any wonder that they don't show that side of their characters that would allow them to do and be good? Leaders need to speak directly to that side of human nature which is good and call it forth. This is much easier to do if the leaders are themselves a good example of what they ask of others.

If the will to serve people well is present then it is often possible to add on those things, which are still lacking. In this sense quality can be learned and taught. For this reason leaders need to see the mission of service quality as a human development effort that does not ever cease. Quality is only as good as today's effort and human beings don't merely develop, they also decline and miss the mark. For these reasons the pursuit of quality has to be recognized as being an ever present leadership and personal challenge. Fortunately, nothing that is good that is done for another human being is ever lost, as it will always speak for itself. Leaders must have faith that being and doing good is possible if they are to encourage others to follow suit. While there is sacrifice in following this challenge there is also the certainty that there is no other way to service quality than through a commitment to bringing out the good in people.

It is remarkable that bringing out the good that's possible in the lives of clients of human services is in turn dependent on people who must be good in order to do good. Yet see evidence every day that these two 'goods' are both real and capable of being enriched. Quality is ultimately a human achievement in both its inner and outer aspects. Its always within our grasp if we resolve to see beyond what is to what should be. Our leaders must welcome and encourage this tendency as a necessary precondition for seeing people get the good lives they deserve.

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