

CHAPTER 1

ABOUT THE PEOPLE MODEL

This is a book about people. It's a book about building good character and *leading* from good character. It's a book designed for people who are ready to get serious about developing into first-rate leaders. It's also meant for leaders who are doggedly determined to solidify first-rate teams.

Almost all of us agree that good character is the centerpiece of authentic first-rate leadership. Good character is the key to good leadership because people tend to follow whatever standard the leader sets. Recent studies in moral intelligence show that the level of morality exercised by a company's character consistently affects the bottom line. It takes good character to grapple with reality. It takes good character to treat people right. It takes good character to build unity among networks of people and causes.

Thus every situation that a leader might face calls for the same three attributes: humility, courage, and honesty.

Most leaders have the willingness to improve their character, but so often they are not told how to do so. How do leaders learn to lead “above the line,” so to speak? How can leaders grow in self-awareness? How can leaders learn to look inwardly? How can they keep themselves from becoming too defensive to accept the kind of feedback that they need?

These questions are important because people are important. Moreover, as research studies show, character deficits lead to financial deficits in the long run. Character deficits are very costly. Qualities such as arrogance and presumption, cowardice and people pleasing, deception and image management all weigh companies down.

Of course, no leader *wants* to lead with character deficits. Yet everyone has seen character deficits play out. I have seen them play out in various studies that I conducted while earning my MBA. I have seen them play out in magazine and newspaper articles. I have seen them in my places of employment. Most vividly I have seen them in myself.

Though by vocation I work in a private university, I wrote this book for people in a variety of fields. My primary target audience is the business community, yet the book applies to anyone in any setting—including nonprofit organizations, churches, and even families.

The uniqueness of this book is that it teaches through an instrument called the People Model. Take note: The People Model is based on Greek philosophy, yet it is original in its form and application. Like other innovations, it began as intuition. It was born from a hunch that burst into a full-blown model because logic gave it structure and meaning. Though the People

Model is not scientific or research based, it's empirical in the sense that experience confirms its validity. Essentially it's a grid that describes three sets of people: the Strategists, the Humanitarians, and the Diplomats. But the model is much more than a grid.

The People Model is a tool that can be used for practical purposes: to increase self-awareness, to make sense of confusing situations, to motivate people, to instigate changes, to establish stronger teams, to imagine new solutions, and to approach hard conversations more effectively. The People Model presents such a fresh way of thinking that its fruitfulness is hard to exhaust.

Another way of putting it is that the People Model yields three discrete types of decision-making power: *explanatory power* to interpret organizational behavior, *motivational power* to muster up people's willingness to forfeit stubborn habits that have weakened their effectiveness in the past, and *creative power* to imagine wise solutions for the future.

The birth of the People Model was intentional in the sense that I was trying to crack a code. I was trying to make sense of confusing situations I had personally observed over the years. I also was trying to learn more and better ways to respond to sticky issues in the workplace. I started my reflections—at least on a conscious level—with the premise that people usually do things for a reason; we operate from specific motivations. What the People Model shows is that those reasons and motivations sometimes can dramatically clash.

After reflecting deeply, I realized that the hardest lessons I've learned about leadership have come to me in the context of complex situations. What the People Model shows is that difficult situations can't be fairly sorted out simply by dubbing some people as "good guys" and others as "bad guys." While it's true the world

has its tyrants and its heroes, it is also true that tyrants have their good points and that heroes aren't heroic in every way.

Although the People Model itself came to me as a blast of inspiration, it only took one evening for me to see it playing out in every workplace I've been part of and every relationship I've been in. For example, I could see it in my marriage. I could see it in my family, my workplace, my church, and in every organization that I knew of. That's why I have named it the People Model. Wherever people are, the model is there as well.

To be clear, the People Model applies both to individuals and organizations. Though every person and every company is a mix of all three types, there's a test that you can use informally to help you see which category most closely mirrors you. You can also use this test to assess your organization as a whole. If you want, you can take the test (beginning on page 173) now.

Okay, on to the model. My intention is to present it in three ways: (a) by explaining its basic form, (b) by illustrating its implications through a fictional story, and (c) by describing different ways to apply it. These three presentations are respectively reflected in the structure of the book.

Part 1 gives the bare bones of the model. Part 2 shows in detail how the model plays out and elaborates on its endless implications. Part 3 deals with practical application, putting the model to use. Part 4 includes a test and a workbook. Though the workbook is designed for small group discussion, you can use it privately if you like. Since the People Model applies to virtually every situation, you as the reader are left to decide how deep you want to go in your self-examination and assessment of your team or organization.

Now let's dive in and see what kind of impact the People Model has on you.