



*Great Leaders
Great Organizations
Lasting Results*

There are no permanent enemies or allies, only permanent interests

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Master Leaders know that “There are no permanent enemies or allies, only permanent interests.” This is probably easier to see on an international level. Over time Canada and the United States were sworn enemies with Japan and Germany whereas today Japan and Germany are among our closest allies. At the same time, there is fierce competition between the United States and China as to which country will be the dominate economic powerhouse ten years from now. However, if there isn’t a much more focus on saving the environment and sustainability soon it won’t matter who is the dominate economic powerhouse.

Similarly, Microsoft and Apple were sworn enemies, yet at one time Bill Gates helped rescue Apple. How could that be good for Microsoft? With the competition between Microsoft, Apple and Google, they are all winners because each organization has to do research and development that it probably wouldn’t do if there was no such fierce competition. Likewise all of the customers win because we get better products.

Mergers and strategic alliances are also great examples. Research has shown that only one-third of mergers and acquisitions are successful. The reason two-thirds are unsuccessful is due to the organization's failure to benefit on the strengths and talents that the merger was supposed to integrate and produce a more effective and efficient organization. Much of this failure to capitalize on strengths and talents is based on culture wars and not being able to rise about their differences. This inability to come together and bridge the divisions that exist has been named “the terrorism line.”

More specifically, the terrorism line is the opposite of the ability to see the big picture. The terrorism line are boundaries within organizations, communities and nations in which subgroups see each other as enemies, compete for scarce resources and fail to cooperate and collaborate for the greater good.

A current example of multiple terrorism lines that are destroying an organization is the internal warfare that is taking place in the Republican Party in the United States. There has been so many negative ads that the candidates have directed towards each other, that no matter who is chosen as nominee, it will be near to impossible to bring the differing fractions together. President Obama will not have to pay a cent to produce negative ads against the eventual “winner”; all he will have to do is use the ads that they have used against each other.

Likewise, when parents are divorcing, the children can often become casualties unless their parents subdue their animosity and partner together for the good of their children!

Overcoming and/or Eliminating the Terrorism Line. There is a landmark study by social psychologist Muzafer Sherif on group conflict. Twenty-two fifth-grade boys attended summer camp together and were divided into two groups of 11 boys each and named the Eagles and the Snakes. After working cooperatively for two weeks, they were pitted against each other in a lengthy tournament of sports and other competitive activities. Animosity was greatly intensified by having the two groups compete on every level possible including stealing each other's flags.

In the end, the authors of this experiment, introduced a problem. A water truck that was bringing water to the camp was purposely stuck in mud and unable to deliver water to the camp. The result of which was that the camp would have to close. The only solution was to have the two groups, that had been bitter enemies, work together to find a solution to the problem. This is also known as a *superordinate* goal. Once the groups started working together, all the animosity stopped and they worked as one with the goal of saving the camp.

Modern day equivalents, is work that is being done with young members of various tribes in Africa where young boys and girls who had been socialized to hate members of other tribes. The intervention is to give the boys and girls an opportunity to play soccer with real soccer balls and real soccer equipment. The only caveat, is that members of different tribes have to play on the same teams. In order to continue playing in the various tournaments they had to cooperate and as a result completely changed their attitudes towards each other.

In a similar vein, organizations like Outward Bound use experiential activities where the members of a group have to work together to succeed to help make the invisible team visible and help the group focus on the larger goal and break down or better yet, eliminate terrorism lines.

Exercise: Describe an example that you know of where individuals or subgroups in an organization were not able to cross the terrorism line and as a result of that fragmentation, the organization was not as effective as it could or should have been.

Exercise: Describe an example that you know of where individuals or subgroups in an organization were able to cross the terrorism line and as a result of removing that fragmentation, the organization was more effective.

Exercise: Think of an example where you can help subgroups in your organization cross the terrorism line and as a result of lessening or eliminating that fragmentation, your organization will be more effective in the future.

For more information on how you can develop and/or enhance your leadership, negotiating and presentation skills, contact:

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