



Humble Pie: The Perfect Leadership Dessert

I've recently observed the negative impact arrogance and ego have on organizations. Arrogant and ego driven leaders cause an array of challenges that lead to poor morale and low achievement of business goals. Employees report to me there is nothing worse than working for an arrogant, ego driven leader. I must admit that I agree.

We've heard the phrase, "**Someone needs to eat a little humble pie,**" a tongue in cheek reference meaning someone needs to get off their high horse. Well, there is validity in thinking about humility as a leadership quality. In fact, it just might be the food of leadership champions. Humility is identified by business expert Jim Collins as a critical factor in taking one's leadership to the next level.

In his book **Good to Great** Collins discusses the Level Five leader, a person who takes a company to unexpected levels of success. One of the major qualities found in these leaders is humility. Collins defines humility as, "channeling ego needs away from oneself and into the larger goal of building a great company." Level 5 leaders do have ego and ambition, but their ambition is first and foremost for the business, not themselves. Level 5 leaders have a combination of humility and will that enable them to do great things in the companies they serve.

Ken Blanchard, world renowned leadership expert, also advocates for humility in leadership. He believes leadership should be grounded in humility and a deep desire to serve the company and employees. Blanchard advocates servant leadership, challenging leaders to ask whether they are in the business of serving themselves or serving others. He believes arrogance and ego combine to wreak havoc in companies. Blanchard and his colleague Phil Hodges host **Egomaniac Anonymous** meetings as part of their leadership work. During these meetings leaders identify how arrogance and ego cause negative outcomes in their leadership.

As someone who spends lots of time helping others and myself manage ego, I think it is imperative for leaders to be honest about whether or not they lead from a place of ego and arrogance. If you are, you may notice these qualities in your leadership: the need to be affirmed and confirmed and/or the need to prove you are better and right all of the time. Arrogant and ego driven leaders frequently condemn others to build themselves up. What I observe in arrogant leaders is they constantly create situations that make everything be about them. The irony is when these leaders start to tackle ego issues what often emerges is low-self esteem and deep fear that maybe they aren't all they've puffed themselves up to be.

On the other hand I find the humble leader finds satisfaction in the success of others. They view their job as clearing the path for others to succeed. Humble leaders seldom seek attention yet they are always noticed. Humble leaders are most satisfied when employees see them as a resource and conduit for their own success. They truly believe they are in service to others.

As we enter the holiday season and desserts start to fly, I encourage all leaders to conduct an assessment of their leadership style. If you find that arrogance and ego are challenges for you, I encourage you to add a little humble pie to the dessert tray. It may be the best thing you've eaten all year. Enjoy the holiday season. Onward and Upward leaders!