

Commentary on Personal Authenticity Applied Project

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The application project for this domain facilitated an understanding of personal worldview and its impact on individual and others-centered leadership processes. According to Sire (2004), ‘one of the most important uses of worldview analysis is self-analysis’ (p. 138). Self-analysis for this project was facilitated by completion of the Reflected Best Self (RBS) exercise (Roberts, Spreitzer, Dutton, Quinn, Heaphy & Barker, 2005). Results of the process have been included in the portfolio (Appendix A). This process was very encouraging and cemented an understanding of the central focus that should govern my life – Christ-centered living (Boa, 2001). By embracing spiritual disciplines I can grow as an authentic leader.

At the time of completion of this project I worked for Welcome House in Northern Kentucky. The attached recommendation letter from Pat Reiber (Appendix B) sums up my work and development as an authentic leader. My work at Welcome House involved teaching, coaching, and training individuals who were suffering under the ill effects of every social ill imaginable (see images in Appendices C, D, E, F). The images demonstrate evidence of intentional leadership actions towards influencing the development of authentic lifestyles through influencing individuals at the organizations highlighted. Leader action that models authenticity includes teaching money management to women at a halfway house (Appendix C), being a role model and life coach for men at a lock-up facility (Appendix D), employment training for drug addicts in Covington, KY (Appendix E), and facilitating group sessions for anger management and mental health issues in low income neighborhoods (Appendix F). Interactions with these groups have always centered on the idea that how we see our lives and the people around us is shaped by our worldview (Colson & Pearcey, 1999). Our worldview is the angle from which we each see our different worlds – both external and internal. The shaping

of personal, organizational, and group vision, mission and place in the world largely depends on the worldview that one embodies (Sire, 2004). Communicating this to listeners has had significant impact as the letter from Pat Reiber corroborates (Appendix B).

Direct feedback received from colleagues through the RBS exercise (Appendix G) was very instructive. I learnt that while I am very busy beating up on myself for my failures and missed opportunities, there are people who view me favorably and have been impacted by my life. For instance, there have been many times when I have lamented my failures and weaknesses yet my wife has continually helped me pivot back to my strengths. I learnt that I have many areas of strengths but have not fully developed them because I have tended to focus on the areas that I need to improve in. Personal authenticity requires the identification of personal strengths.

What Roberts et al., (2005) state is true, "...the strength-based orientation of the RBS exercise helps you get past the 'good enough' bar" (p. 80). I'm encouraged to focus on my strengths and center my life on disciplined spirituality. Good feedback allows me to continue growing and developing into a better person so that I can help others. The RBS exercise facilitated a good understanding of my present state as a leader and provided the impetus for measuring it against future leadership expectations. The main questions that arose from this exercise are listed here and the impact on personal leadership outlined:

1. What are my strengths? – Few people know what they are good at. The RBS exercise was helpful in determining personal strengths as reflected in observations from colleagues.

Personal performance is easier improved when one has an accurate understanding of personal strengths. Discovering personal strengths has helpful in not only redesigning my work tasks but also clarifying the overarching mission of my life – to make an authentic difference as a servant leader within my community.

2. What are my areas of improvement? – The journey of leader development includes the three components of assessment, challenge, and support (Van Velsor, & McCauley, 2004). More often than not, people know what they are not good at but it takes feedback from peers to clarify how to improve in these areas. The RBS exercise allowed this writer to clarify this and develop strategies for improvement.
3. How do I perform? – The RBS exercise was not only helpful in providing answers but also in spurring my thinking towards more wholesome leadership competences. The exercise facilitated an introspective examination of personal leadership performance. The main questions that came up include: Do I establish a clear standard of expected performance? Am I honest and straightforward in providing feedback on performance and assessing advancement opportunities? Do I give specific suggestions for improvement? Do I embrace conflict and use it to drive us forward? Do I provide immediate compliments to employees? How do I handle power in the organization? Do I let stress become unhealthy and hinder organizational objectives? Do I have adequate training to perform my job assignments?
4. What are my values? – People do not perform well in environments where their value systems are incompatible to those being modeled. The RBS exercise facilitated self-analysis that allowed reflective comparison of my personal values to those of my workplace. This was not only helpful in redesigning my work functions but also prompted a commitment towards working towards more explicit demonstration of personal worldview.
5. Where do I belong? – By helping to define personal strengths, areas of improvement, work performance style, and the leadership values that guide me, the RBS report facilitated a determination of key environments that would be ideal for my growth as a leader. The

overriding characteristics of such environments are defined in the core worldview paper included in this leadership domain.

6. What should I contribute? – Every human being has an opportunity to contribute to the advancement of human society. By analyzing one's best self and continuously improving on leadership skill through personal growth one can contribute effectively to society. This continues to be a journey of discovery for this writer.

The Apostle Paul said, "Whatever may be your task, work at it heartily as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that it is from the Lord that you will receive the inheritance which is your reward. You are actually serving the Lord Christ" (Colossians 3:23,24, TAB). The Reflected Best Self (RBS) exercise, from a Christian perspective, is a process that begins and ends with a commitment – a commitment to continually develop oneself into the kind of leader or manager whose actions will bring glory to God. The leader or manager must be a person whose desire is to excel in authenticity with fellow human beings and towards God. That is the kind of leader worth emulating and following.

In conclusion, seeing myself through the eyes of others has made me even more confident about my personality and leadership abilities. I have developed a stronger belief in my life purpose and calling. I have been inspired to retrieve my vision book which I wrote about ten years ago but has been gathering dust on my book shelf. I learnt that there are personal traits that I have taken for granted, for instance, smiling that have had a huge impact on those around me. I began seeing that every little thing I do has meaning to those around me and I should be more intentional in my interactions. I am a better person as a result of reflecting on the very best within me through the eyes of those who are closest to me. I now know my best strengths as a leader who is grounded on beliefs that are eternal and endeavor to please my Maker.

References

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Appendix A

Reflected Best Self Exercise

Common Themes	Examples Given	Interpretation
1. Visionary, inspirational and optimistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I grasp the smaller pictures and the bigger pictures of life. - I inspire others to attain difficult things. 	I am at my best when thinking and talking about the future. I bring new ideas and vision to people. I am innovative and believe in people.
2. Determined, courageous, and adventurous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Left Africa to come to the U.S. - I hiked up Pike's Peak, carrying a friend's bag . -Self-published three books 	I am at my best when I have challenges that stretch my perceptions of the world. I am goal-oriented and persevere.
3. Faithful, team player and people person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I have a faith that directs goal setting and decision making. - I am constantly smiling and make time for people. 	I am grounded in my values and beliefs. I enjoy working with others and challenging them to excel. I like being around other people.
4. Integrity, character and humility-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I am disciplined with my life and purposeful. - I talk to people in a gentle and caring way. 	I value being true to myself and those around me. I am committed to living honorably.

Appendix B

Personal Authenticity Recommendation



May 22, 2009

founded in 1982 by a coalition of churches

Dear Sir or Madam;

I welcome the opportunity to have a hearing today, I have been asked by Herman Najoli to offer some observations concerning his interactions on the job and with both clients and co-workers. I am happy to say that Herman and I while not long term colleagues, have quickly developed a fast friendship. Herman is an insightful, informed, and articulate conveyor of ideas and philosophies and quick to share and apply those ideas in the circumstances of our daily work.

The work that we do at Welcome House involves a the daily task of teaching, coaching, and training of individuals and groups who are suffering under the ill effects of virtually every social ill imaginable. We see homelessness, lack of education, mental health problems, substance abuse, post traumatic stress disorders stemming from every type of abuse you can imagine, and family deterioration. In Herman's position as a curriculum coordinator, he has to not only maintain the highest possible standard of excellence in his own teaching, but in many cases, evaluate and train others so that they can maintain these standards as well.

Herman has frequently communicated his compassion for our clients to me and has offered valuable insight on possible improvements I could make in my own teaching. As a job coach, I frequently refer my clients back to the classes they took with Herman and calling to their attention the things that he taught them. I have yet to meet a client who didn't appreciate the knowledge and spirit that Herman brings to class, and many, when reminded, have recalled that it was Herman who shared insights into the world of work that helped them to be successful.

On a personal note Herman has also shared with me some of his previous work and life experience. I have thoroughly enjoyed and benefitted from these discussions and look forward to continuing to do so in the future. Herman and I have also shared and at times jokingly commiserated about our experiences as husbands and fathers and I appreciate his friendship in that regard as well.

In closing Herman has quickly established himself in my mind as a valued asset to our agency and I personally look forward to working with him in the future.

Sincerely:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patrick F. Reiber".

Patrick F. Reiber
Employment Specialist
Welcome House of Northern Kentucky

Appendix C

Teaching Money Management to Women at a Halfway House in Northern Kentucky



Appendix D

Life Coach for Men at a Lock-Up Facility in Dayton, KY



Appendix E

Employment Training for Drug Addicts in Covington, KY



Appendix F

Facilitating Group Session for Anger Management and Mental Health Issues



Appendix G

Sample Responses from Reflected Best Self Exercise

Response 1: Donald Evans

Visionary: It is obvious that Herman has both a personal sense of vision as well as a corporate sense of vision. As one who has come from a foreign country to not only fulfill his own personal destiny, but to positively influence the lives of others, Herman is an outstanding role model. A “visionary” is one who had the unique ability to grasp both the smaller pictures and the bigger pictures of life. Herman exemplifies these qualities with his positive and sincere approach to leadership.

Determined: an obvious mark of Herman’s determined nature and sense of purpose is his choice to make a life in the United States for he and his family, thousands of miles from homeland of Africa. That always takes courage and a sense of adventure. And it is the adventurers in life who have both a sense of determination and a sense of wonder mixed with curiosity. Herman possesses the ability to look at life with a sense of excitement and passion. To talk to him about the things that he is excited about, raises the level of excitement in others. Determination to succeed inspires others to attempt what they thought was once unattainable.

Faithful: faith in God seems to be an important component in Herman’s goal setting and decision making process in life. It becomes the building block for his sense of vision, purpose and destiny. It also illuminates his thinking and provides a source of strength in the midst of hardships and difficulties.

Response 2: Sultana Kalligas

Unfortunately, I don't feel like I got to see enough at the training to really know how to answer any of the questions; all I can say is that I noticed then, as I have continued observing, that you are quite open to self-improvement and to constructive criticism, and that you seem very patient and positive. In fact, you rarely express any negativity, which is a big plus for a prospective teacher. On a personal note, I would hope you also delve deeper in guiding a student and give them meaningful, constructive feedback when necessary (many people are distrustful of a constantly smiling and encouraging teacher!).

I am sure that if I knew you better I would be able to write a lot more, Herman. I hope this is even a tiny bit useful.