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We manage as who we are

Laurent Lapierre¹

Summary

Leadership is neither a special ability nor a series of interpersonal skills that have been assimilated with varying degrees of success. Leadership is a function of the stature of an individual who has been recognized by a community as an agent of change—usually major and at a specific point in time. Normative and theoretical approaches to leadership are inadequate.

Leadership comes from within. We have no choice but to manage as who we are, with our own unique set of innate talents and, more important, acquired skills. Managing others demands that we come to terms with our personal faults and qualities, our natural talents and shortcomings, our strengths and weaknesses, our comfort and discomfort with different aspects of management, our skills and our lack thereof... Self-examination—coming to terms with oneself—is the first and most important step in becoming a successful leader.

Working from an Anglo-Saxon perspective, Laurent Lapierre argues that responsible management and leadership require more than a set of qualities, skills and competencies: they rely primarily on basic judgement, common sense, and practical intelligence about how groups and organizations function. In short, management and leadership depend on what we could call the “intelligence of actions.”

¹ Laurent Lapierre, Ph.D. (McGill University) is a full professor at HEC Montréal and holds the Pierre-Péladeau Chair in Leadership. He is also the first director of the HEC Montréal Centre for Case Studies. His main interests lie in the influence of managers' personalities on their management practices, as well as in the behaviours that determine success or failure in the exercise of leadership. Dr. Lapierre was director and editor-in-chief of the journal *Gestion, revue internationale de gestion*, and is the co-author of *Imaginaire et leadership* (3 volumes: 1992, 1993 and 1994), published by Québec/Amérique and Presses HEC. He has produced over 200 monographs and case studies of leaders, managers, creators and artists, published for the most part at the HEC Montréal Centre for Case Studies. In 1997, he was awarded the prestigious Teaching Award by HEC Montréal, followed by, in 2001, the 3M Teaching Fellowship awarded by the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE). In recognition of these achievements, he was named “personality of the week” in the August 5, 2001 issue of Montreal daily *La Presse*. In 2003, he received the coveted Leadership in Management Education Award (Quebec Region), co-sponsored by the *National Post* and PricewaterhouseCoopers. In 2004, he was appointed member of the board of Montreal World Book Capital for 2005, in addition to being named to the Executive Committee of the Canada Council for the Arts. He was voted “Professor of the Year” by MBA students at HEC Montréal in 2004-2005. Since the fall of 2005, Laurent Lapierre has hosted the program *Leaders* (<http://argent.canoe.com/>) on the digital channel *Argent*. The show features interviews with prominent leaders in the world of business, arts and culture, science, and others. Laurent Lapierre also writes a weekly column on leadership for the *Argent* network, the *Journal de Montréal* and the *Journal de Québec*. In 2007, he was named Member of the Order of Canada, and was the first recipient of the Esdras-Minville Award from HEC Montréal for outreach activities.