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Head, Heart & Soul

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We humans are a curious sort. We see so clearly a task to perform, a process to follow, and the mechanics of the things we like to do. Yet we seem to struggle with the reasoning for the task, the product of the task, and unknowingly, with some sense of the integrity of task. Why—we humans like to do what we do, just because...

Years ago, a professor of mine told a story about his mother preparing a roast for the oven. (I think he made up the story, but what the heck.) The first step of the task—cut the roast in half. The inquisitive young and one-day-to-be-professor inquired of his mother, “Why cut the roast in half?” “Never mind,” and the matter-of-factly response implied this is the way of it; it is what Grandma did to prepare a roast for the oven. In time, as the story goes, the professor came to understand something his mother never knew or cared to know—the reason why Grandma cut the roast in half. It seems that in Grandma’s world, the roast was a precious commodity—a treat Grandma managed by cutting the roast in half to ensure an even distribution of delicious product for today’s hot meal and tomorrows cold sandwiches.



Managing the tasks of the day, critical processes and the mechanics of things in the workplace is vital for success and we all know that to be a practical truth. However, it seems that the critical questions for leadership are not about task; rather, it is about the reason for the task, the product of the task, and the integrity of task. Grandma understood the reason why she cut the roast in half (her mission); she realized the product of the task with the even distribution of the treat (her vision success); and the integrity by which to perform her collective roasting tasks (her values). Grandma did manage and perform the task, just like mom. However, Grandma did something mom failed to grasp—Grandma placed herself in the role of a leader. Grandma truly understood her roasting in terms to transcend the task, she understood roasting in terms captured in concepts such as mission, vision and values.

The other day I came across a saying I think Grandma could understand.

If you think of mission and vision as an organization’s head and heart, the values it holds are its soul.

I know this is just a play on words—but in my opinion, the point is profound—managers see to the efficiency of tasks while leaders see to the effectiveness of tasks and effectiveness is found in the head and the heart and the soul of an organization.

Yes—we are a curious sort and we like to do what we do, just because... However, the challenge is typically with leadership and leaders like my professor’s Grandma seem to “get it.” In part, people who “get it” become leaders by being a real presence in the workplace—these leaders do understand, work with, and influence the head, the heart and the soul of the workplace.

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