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I am not your typical engineer and I am not your typical speaker/facilitator about leadership, I hope this is part of the attraction.

I have come to a point in my life where I can see how the assumptions about leadership, about what “they” want is holding us back from stepping into our own individual and authentic leadership. Corporations have trained people to become “Experts” which, I believe is now limiting individual’s journey into leadership. We have many managers but very few leaders.

The experiences and skills that I have acquired along this path have been quite diverse but, each hold a unique piece that has allowed me to understand and formulate this work. The path has not been a straight line and I have learned from various schools of thought over the years. I have had the opportunity to directly and indirectly study, practice, learn and be taught from different points of view about leadership.

As a teenager I experienced leadership training in high school through an organization called HOBY. This program’s main intention was to teach students how to think for themselves and not about what to think. This planted some powerful seeds for further teachings to grow from. After high school I studied chemical and biochemical engineering at the University of Western Ontario. This was the beginning of my ‘hard-core’ “expert” training (and for good reason). I graduated and began working in the water treatment industry with ZENON Environmental Inc, which was later acquired by GE Water & Process Technologies. I worked in this industry for over 10 years, continued my training in becoming a licenced professional engineer while also training to become an “expert” working at GE and an “expert” in the water industry with hollow fibre membranes. I held several product management leadership positions and was responsible for a \$50MM global product line. I lead teams to design and create new products and lead the



commercialization effort of these new products. These leadership roles had me indirectly and directly influencing, guiding and mentoring people and teams all over the world.

After working for about 7 years I began to really look at my own behaviours in the workplace. How was I showing up and how did I feel about it? Taking the time to examine the answers to these questions lead to me discover the thoughts that I was having. I was then able to see the thoughts that were holding me back, not from moving up the corporate ladder but from feeling really great about who I was. Ultimately I believe that when you are conscious about your actions and the impact they have on you, you can really begin to lead your own career (and life in general) instead of reacting to it. So, I pose this next question as an invitation to look at how we can lead consciously as opposed to making choices and leading our lives in default mode often defined by our “expert” training. How can you lead others without first knowing how to do this?

My reflective thinking quickly lead me to questioning things like productivity (not just being busy), collaboration (instead of competition), leading from the position you are in (instead of waiting to be in a formal leadership position) and ultimately, what makes a good leader? Once I began pondering these questions a beautiful mentor walked into my life and with her I studied *The Genuine Contact* (GC) program, which provided me with a solid facilitation foundation and simple frameworks to help organizations and individuals through complex problems. The GC program taught me how to create space so that everyone in a meeting setting or during one on one interaction could feel safe enough to step into their leadership even if only for a moment. This is powerful. I was fortunate enough to put the GC program into practice at GE. I began working with internal teams and external customers; creating meeting spaces where we could have meaningful conversation, where everyone’s voices were heard, where communication occurred as never before, where people began to recognize their value and worth and believed they had something to contribute. This fostered collaboration, creativity, and innovation all while breaking down invisible barriers between one another and within themselves.

As I continued to practice the GC facilitation work globally, I also pursued my studies in other areas of my life. Personal growth not only became an important aspect of my life but it also continually serves as vital information for connecting to people and facilitating this work. I became a student of yoga and am now a certified instructor, I studied energy healing modalities, and as a daily practice I read books and engage in communities, workshops and conversations about becoming more conscious and I continue to practice each of these pieces every single day. It is from this combined experience, learning, self-practice and witnessing the impact on others that I share this with you.

Leadership is a journey about living life fully and feeling good about it, it is not about a title. Defining what good leadership behaviours are and then getting curious about





why your behaviours are not aligning with your beliefs is how we all step into our leadership. I am passionate about holding space for people to really step into their leadership. I believe this is how we guide people to their greatest potential so they may share their greatness with the world.

From my experience, I see the blocks appear that hold people back from walking over the bridge from “expert” to leader. These blocks are a reoccurring theme that show up when I am facilitating meaningful, productive and effective conversations in organizations and from both my formal and informal one on one coaching sessions. These blocks often reside in a fear that we carry with us in our thoughts and subconscious belief systems. Working through the hopes and fears of the group allows the entire group to move forward. Individually, connecting and sharing these fears allows them to be met with kindness and compassion instead of giving power to the fear based thoughts restricting our participation. Acknowledging the fear also gives time for you to stay strong in your beliefs so that you can choose consciously in any situation instead of simply reacting. This powerful process allows for the entire group to continue moving forward instead of spinning in the same spot.

I believe that if engineers or any professional begins the journey over their own bridge from “expert” to leader they will be able to use their expertise in a powerful way that contributes to themselves, those around them, the company they work for and society as a whole. The world needs this and each human needs this. Let’s start this journey together.

