

My Personal Leadership Mission

Aligning with human nature can show dramatic results in successfully communicating, heightening relationships, and actuating change.

By [Robert Pater](#) | Apr 01, 2015

One of the principal ways people derive power and satisfaction is from knowing of and adhering to their prime mission. My birthday is a few days away as I write this; a personal New Year Day is a good time to think of your own leadership mission. Here's mine.

I know that nature is powerful. In fact, though some might attempt to deny, subvert, or overcome it, the forces of nature are beyond comprehension. Just look at water's ability to cumulatively erode rock-hard materials over time or acutely transfer shattering forces that originally emanated thousands of miles away. A tsunami--whose height may be less than one foot (30 centimeters) when traversing the open ocean--can elevate exponentially when it reaches a shore. Volcanoes and earthquakes generate fantastic force, but also think of the capability of a slender plant to break through and grow in tiny cracks in concrete.

Similarly, *human* nature is also powerful. So my question here is: Do I attempt to ignore or fight or try to redirect this? Ignoring usually shows up as making plans in the pristine site of an office or boardroom, separate from working reality. It can be based on thinking of others as empty vessels or cardboard creatures who can be imprinted to mindlessly behave in the ways I'd want. On the other side, fighting human nature means trying to maneuver or manipulate others through show of force into bending to my will, talking more or louder or threatening with punishing consequences. This "going perpendicular" to people (as my colleague Paul McClellan states) always backfires--perhaps not immediately, but over time consistently, resulting either in direct pushback or loss of the would-be paradigm pusher's credibility or outright disengagement. (Others eventually opt out, physically or mentally.) Further, it's exhausting to even attempt to arrest the flowing current of

others' inclinations.

In contrast, my mission is to make use of energy, utilizing rather than opposing universal human tendencies and reactions. To strengthen this ability, in addition to continued studying, I've made a lifelong practice of certain internal martial arts, where the practitioner has to recognize direction and magnitude of surrounding forces and then redirect these as safely and effortlessly as possible. But before sensing external forces, the adept has to first feel and befriend his/her own. This is the approach of mindfully "peeling the onion"; it never ends. There is no stop to becoming a better internal martial artist--or any kind of artist, whether visual or performing or leadership.

So, in line with this, I seek to monitor, understand, and align with human nature. This means not giving in to the understandably easy tendencies to accuse or blame when I'm frustrated, not giving up when temporarily stymied, not losing focus, for too long at least, when things don't immediately go my way. Easy to say or write, not as easy to actually do. For example, I'm a huge fan of each person being accountable for his or her own decisions and actions; but have you seen how many leaders automatically default toward only equating this with "punishment"/sanctions, rather than also with teaching, supporting, and reinforcing positive actions? My mission is to keep reminding myself of the entire spectrum of being accountable, allowing me a fuller range of strategies to try on when I run into a brick wall, other than just bashing my head harder or turning away bitter.

Aligning with human nature can show dramatic results in successfully communicating, heightening relationships, and actuating change. My wife and two children have been wonderful teachers, helping me (at times to my discomfort) learn that my trying to overpower them--for their own good, of course (or that's what I've told myself)--just doesn't work well. Sure, it's relatively easy to be the "victor" in a few battles by overwhelming force, but it's harder to win the war and ultimately most difficult to have a real and sustaining peace.

And on a professional level, I've both seen and shown how personal safety can become significantly improved by *self*-monitoring and then slightly adjusting internal forces that comprise potent physical balance, actually natural alignment, truly usable strength, and native movement paths to prevent soft-tissue injuries, slips/trips/falls, and hand injuries. I mean reducing these injuries "dramatically" in a relatively short time, after a previous slew of "standard" strategies have been attempted that either ignore or fight human nature. And though some think of the physical as separate, when becoming more, let's say, balanced, problems with mental slips and emotional strains also typically show simultaneous improvements.

I know that real and growing improvements come more from focus and ongoing consistent efforts than from big one-shot, hit-or-miss pushes, and that a driving force in my and everyone's nature is to have more control of our own lives. So, as a leader who believes in joining with and not fighting internally hardwired forces, a big part of my mission is to help everyone become more in control through learning and using higher-level mindsets, skillsets, and toolsets.

But this all starts within me: If I can't change myself, how can I possibly help others do the same? And in this time-famished world, the less I ask of myself and others, the more likely we'll be able to actually do something. So my mission is to look for and then help each of us find and practice small, time-efficient changes that can blossom into large differences.

Ultimately, my personal leadership mission is to become an ever-better leader for my own life and to help others do the same. What's yours?

About the Author

Robert Pater is Managing Director of Strategic Safety Associates and MoveSMART®. To contact him, email rpater@movesmart.com.

Copyright 1996-2013 1105 Media Inc. All rights reserved.