Appendix F

Making Things Happen by Releasing the Energy of Others*

Several years ago I began an intellectual adventure that has paid high dividends in terms of understanding the role of leadership and in selecting more effective leadership strategies. The adventure consisted of seeing what would happen if one conceptualized a social system (family, group, organization, agency, corporation, school, college, community, state, nation, or world) as a system of human energy.

All at once a set of questions very different from those typically asked by leaders started coming to mind: What is the sum total of the human energy available in the system? What proportion of this energy is now being used? Where is the unused energy located? Why is it not being tapped? What kinds of energy (physical, intellectual, psychic, moral, artistic, technical, social) are represented? What might be done to release this energy for accomplishing greater goals for the system and the individuals in it?

By virtue of simply asking these kinds of questions I began to have to think differently about the role of leadership. Having been raised in the era of Frederick Taylor's "scientific management," I had perceived the role of leadership

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to consist primarily of *controlling* followers or subordinates. Effective leaders, I had been taught, were those who were able to get people to follow their orders. The consequence of this doctrine was, of course, that the output of the system was limited to the vision and ability of the leader, and when I realized this fact I started rethinking the function of leadership. It gradually came to me that the highest function of leadership is *releasing* the energy of the people in the system and managing the processes for giving that energy direction toward mutually beneficial goals.

Perhaps a better way of saying this is that *creative leadership* is that form of leadership which releases the creative energy of the people being led.

In the intervening years since this way of thinking emerged in my mind I have been trying to understand it—and test its validity—in two ways. First, I have been observing leaders of various sorts (teachers, business executives, educational administrators, and organizational and political leaders) through this frame of reference. I have wanted to see if I could identify characteristics that "releasing leaders" possess that "controlling leaders" don't have. Second, I have reexamined the research literature on human behavior, organizational dynamics, and leadership to find out what support it contains for this way of viewing the concept of leadership. I would like to share with you the results of this bifocal inquiry in the form of the following propositions regarding the behavioral characteristics of creative leaders:

1. *Creative leaders make a different set of assumptions (essentially positive) about human nature from the assumptions (essentially negative) made by controlling leaders.* It has been my observation that creative leaders have faith in people, offer them challenging opportunities, and delegate responsibility to them. Two of the clearest presentations of these contrasting assumptions in the literature are reproduced in Exhibit 1: by Douglas McGregor in the case of assumptions by managers and by Carl Rogers in the case of assumptions by educators.

   The validity of the positive set of assumptions is supported by research which indicates that when people perceive the locus of control to reside within themselves, they are more creative and productive (Lefcourt, 1976) and that the more they feel their unique potential is being utilized, the greater their achievement. [Herzberg, 1966; Maslow, 1970]

Exhibit 1
A Comparison of Assumptions About Human Nature and Behavior by Leaders in Management and Education

Theory X Assumptions about Human Nature (McGregor)* (Controlling)	Assumptions Implicit in Current Education (Rogers)** (Controlling)
The average human being inherently dislikes work and will avoid it if he can.	The student cannot be trusted to pursue his own learning.
Because of this characteristically human dislike of work, most people must be coerced, controlled, threatened in the interest of organizational objectives.	Presentation equals learning. The aim of education is to accumulate brick upon brick of factual knowledge.
The average human being prefers to be directed, wishes to avoid responsibility, has relatively little ambition, wants security above all.	The truth is known. Creative citizens develop from passive learners. Evaluation is education and education is evaluation.
Theory Y Assumptions about Human Nature (Releasing)	**Assumptions Relevant to Significant Experiential Learning (Releasing)**
The expenditure of physical and mental effort is as natural as play or rest.	Human beings have a natural potentiality for learning.
External control and threat of punishment are not the only means for bringing about effort toward organizational objectives. Man will exercise self-direction and self-control in the service of objectives to which he is committed.	Significant learning takes place when the subject matter is perceived by the student as relevant to his own purposes.
Commitment to objectives is a function of the rewards associated with their achievement.	Much significant learning is acquired through doing.
The average human being learns, under proper conditions, not only to accept but to seek responsibility.	Learning is facilitated by student's responsible participation in the learning process.
A high capacity for imagination, ingenuity, and creativity in solving organizational problems is widely, not narrowly distributed in the population.	Self-initiated learning involving the whole person—feelings as well as intellect—is the most pervasive and lasting.
Under the conditions of modern industrial life, the intellectual potential of the average human being is only partially utilized.	Creativity in learning is best facilitated when self-criticism and self-evaluation are primary, and evaluation by others is of secondary importance. Creativity in learning is best facilitated when self-criticism and self-evaluation are primary, and evaluation by others is of secondary importance. The most socially useful thing to learning in the modern world is the process of learning, a continuing openness to experience, an incorporation into oneself of the process of change.

* Adapted from McGregor (1960), pp. 33–34 and 47–48 in Knowles (1978), p. 102.
** Adapted from Rogers (1972), pp. 272–279 in Knowles (1978), p. 102.

2. *Creative leaders accept as a law of human nature that people feel a commitment to a decision in proportion to the extent that they feel they have participated in making it.* Creative leaders, therefore, involve their clients, workers, or students in every step of the planning process—assessing needs, formulating goals, designing lines of action, carrying out activities, and evaluating results (except, perhaps, in emergencies). The validity of this proposition is supported by locus of control studies [Lefcourt, 1976] and by research on organizational change [Bennis, Benne, and Chin, 1968; Greiner, 1971; Lippitt, 1969; Martorana, 1975], administration [Baldridge, 1978; Dykes, 1968; Getzels, Lipham, and Campbell, 1968; Likert, 1967; McGregor, 1967], decision-making [Marrow, Bowers, and Seashore, 1968; Millett, 1968; Simon, 1961], and organizational dynamics. [Argyris, 1962; Etzioni, 1961; Schein, 1965; Zander, 1977]
3. *Creative leaders believe in and use the power of self-fulfilling prophesy.* They understand that people tend to come up to other people's expectations for them. The creative coach conveys to his team that he knows they are capable of winning; the good supervisor's employees know that he or she has faith that they will do superior work; the good teacher's students are convinced that they are the best students in school. The classic study demonstrating this principle, Rosenthal and Jacobson's *Pygmalion in the Classroom* (1968), showed that the students of teachers who were told that they were superior students *were* superior students whereas the students of teachers who were told that they were inferior students *were* inferior students. And, of course, there was no difference in the natural ability of the two groups of students. The relationship between positive self-concept and superior performance has been demonstrated in studies of students [Chickering, 1976; Felker, 1974; Rogers, 1969; Tough, 1979] and in general life achievement. [Adams-Webber, 1979; Coan, 1974; Gale, 1974; Kelly, 1955; Loevinger, 1976; McLelland, 1975]
4. *Creative leaders highly value individuality.* They sense that people perform at a higher level when they are operating on the basis of their unique strengths, talents, interests, and goals than when they are trying to conform to some imposed stereotype. They are comfortable with a pluralistic culture and tend to be bored with one that is monolithic. As managers, they encourage a team arrangement in which each member works at what he or she does best and enjoys most; as teachers they strive to tailor the learning strategies to fit the individual learning styles, paces, starting points, needs, and interests of all the students. This proposition is widely supported in the research literature. [Combs and Snygg, 1959; Csikzentmihaly, 1975; Erikson, 1974; Goldstein and Blackman, 1978; Gowan, et al., 1967; Kagan, 1967; Maslow, 1971; Messick, et al., 1976; Moustakas, 1974; Tyler, 1978]

I would like to add another dimension to this proposition—more of a philosophical note than a behavioral observation. It is that creative leaders probably have a different sense of the purpose of life from that of the controlling leaders. They see the purpose of all life activities—work, learning, recreation, civic participation, worship—to be to enable each individual to achieve his or her full and unique potential. They seek to help each person become what Maslow (1970) calls a self-actualizing person, whereas the controlling leader's mission is to produce conforming persons.

5. *Creative leaders stimulate and reward creativity.* They understand that in a world of accelerating change, creativity is a basic requirement for the survival of individuals, organizations, and societies. They exemplify creativity in their own behavior and provide an environment that encourages and rewards innovation in others. They make it legitimate for people to experiment, and treat failures as opportunities to learn rather than as acts to be punished. [Barron, 1963; Bennis, 1966; Cross, 1976; Davis and Scott, 1971; Gardner, 1963; Gowan, et al., 1967; Herzberg, 1966; Ingalls, 1976; Kagan, 1967; Schon, 1971; Toffler, 1974; Zahn, 1966]
6. *Creative leaders are committed to a process of continuous change and are skillful in managing change.* They understand the difference between static and innovative organizations (as portrayed in Exhibit 2) and aspire to make their organizations the latter. They are well grounded in the theory of change and skillful in selecting the most effective strategies for bringing about change. [Arends and Arends, 1977; Baldridge and Deal, 1975; Bennis, Benne, and Chin, 1968; Goodlad, 1975; Greiner, 1971; Hefferlin, 1969; Hornstein, et al., 1971; Lippitt, 1973; Mangham, 1978; Martorana and Kuhns, 1975; Schein and Bennis, 1965; Tedeschi, 1972; Zurcher, 1977]
7. *Creative leaders emphasize internal motivators over external motivators.* They understand the distinction revealed in Herzberg's (1959) research between satisfiers (motivators)—such as achievement, recognition, fulfulling work, responsibility, advancement, and growth—and dissatisfiers (hygienic factors), such as organizational policy and administration, supervision, working conditions, interpersonal relations, salary, status, job security, and personal life. They take steps to minimize the dissatisfiers but concentrate their energy on optimizing the satisfiers. This position is strongly supported by subsequent research. [Levinson, Price, et al., 1963; Likert, 1967; Lippitt, 1973]

Exhibit 2
Some Characteristics of Static Vs. Innovative Organizations

DIMENSIONS	CHARACTERISTICS	
	Static Organizations	**Innovative Organizations**
Structure	Rigid—much energy given to maintaining permanent departments, committees; reverence for tradition, constitution, & by-laws. Hierarchial—adherence to chain of command. Roles defined narrowly. Property-bound.	Flexible—much use of temporary task forces; easy shifting of departmental lines; readiness to change constitution, depart from tradition. Multiple linkages based on functional collaboration. Roles defined broadly. Property-mobile.
Atmosphere	Task-centered, impersonal. Cold, formal, reserved. Suspicious.	People-centered, caring. Warm, informal, intimate. Trusting.
Management Philosophy and Attitudes	Function of management is to control personnel through coercive power. Cautious, low risk-taking. Attitude toward errors: to be avoided. Emphasis on personnel selection. Self-sufficiency—closed system regarding sharing resources. Low tolerance for ambiguity.	Function of management is to release the energy of personnel; power is used supportively. Experimental—high risk-taking. Attitude toward errors: to be learned from. Emphasis on personal development. Interdependency—open system regarding sharing resources. High tolerance for ambiguity.
Decision-making and Policy-making	High participation at top, low at bottom. Clear distinction between policy-making and policy-execution. Decision-making by legal mechanisms. Decisions treated as final.	Relevant participation by all those affected. Collaborative policy-making and policy-execution. Decision-making by problem-solving. Decisions treated as hypotheses to be tested.
Communication	Restricted flow—constipated. One-way—downward. Feelings repressed or hidden.	Open flow—easy access. Multidirectional—up, down, sideways. Feelings expressed.

8. *Creative leaders encourage people to be self-directing.* They sense intuitively what researchers have been telling us for some time—that a universal characteristic of the maturation process is movement from a state of dependency toward states of increasing self-directedness. [Baltes, 1978; Erikson, 1950, 1959, 1964, 1974; Goulet and Baltes, 1970; Gubrium and Buckholdt, 1977; Havighurst, 1970; Kagan and Moss, 1962; Loevinger, 1976; Rogers, 1961] They realize that because of previous conditioning as dependent learners in their school experience, adults need initial help in learning to be self-directing and look to leaders for this kind of help. [Kidd, 1973; Knowles, 1975, 1978, 1980; Tough, 1967, 1979] And, to provide this kind of help, they have developed their skills as facilitators and consultants to a high level [Bell and Nadler, 1979; Blake and Mouton, 1976; Bullmer, 1975; Carkhuff, 1969; Combs, et al, 1978; Lippitt and Lippitt, 1978; Laughary and Ripley, 1979; Pollack, 1976; Schein, 1969; Schlossberg, et al, 1978]

No doubt additional propositions and behavioral characteristics could be identified, but these are the ones that stand out in my observation of creative leaders and review of the literature as being most central. And I have seen wonderful things happen when they have been put into practice. I have seen low-achieving students become high-achieving students when they discovered the excitement of self-directed learning under the influence of a creative teacher. I have seen bench workers in a factory increase their productivity and get a new sense of personal pride and fulfillment under a creative supervisor. I have seen an entire college faculty (at Holland College, Prince Edward Island, Canada) become creative facilitators of learning and content resource consultants through the stimulation of a creative administration. And I have observed several instances in which the line managers of major corporations moved from controlling managers to releasing managers when their management-development programs were geared to these propositions.

Perhaps we're are on the verge of beginning to understand how to optimize the release of the enormous pent-up energy in our human energy systems.