

Developing a Personal Leadership Philosophy

Unraveling Your Personal Mythology

Joseph Campbell, the famous scholar of mythology, believed that everyone has a *personal mythology*, a collection of myths which we create to help us make sense of our world whether we are conscious or not of these myths. Your personal mythology is shaped by life experiences, which in turn shapes your attitudes, beliefs and the values you hold.

In management and leadership, uncovering the personal mythology is a critical first step to releasing leadership potential and to developing your personal leadership philosophy. Recognizing the *drama* in your life, the *language* you use, and the *rituals* you perform to keep your myths alive are essential to conquering the fears and doubts you have or might have in leading yourself and others.

When you are able to articulate your personal mythology, you are more apt to raise awareness to your own leadership skills and style, including the type of leader you want to be.

Complete the following exercise to begin the process of unraveling your personal mythology as it relates to your leadership.

Myths are public
dreams, dreams
are private
myths.

-- Joseph Campbell

Exercise

Personal mythologies are fueled by the stories we retell ourselves. As these stories evolve, it distorts our realities and hardens our ability to seek the truth. For this exercise, identify the major events in your life that have shaped your current reality. This can be a wedding, birth of a child, death in the family, loss of a job, a move across the country, and so on. Ask yourself these questions:

1. In which area of my life does this event have the most impact?
2. What emotions, feelings, and/or thoughts does this event bring up for me?
3. Has this event contributed to my personal mythology? If negatively, what do I need to do to come to terms with this?
4. Has this event influenced my personal leadership? If so, how?
5. Describe the reality of your world (personal mythology) because of this event.

While you work on this exercise, pay attention to how this personal mythology makes you feel and the choices you made as a result. Recognize the points of conjecture between your personal mythology and your own leadership.

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