



Content

Thoughts on leadership
by Karl Pister



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I start with three quotes. Two are very similar and the other links in closely:

Men cannot really long rest content with mediocrity once they see excellence is within their reach.

Remember that once you have experienced excellence, you will never again be content with mediocrity.

Great things never come from comfort zones.

A small story:

A couple of weeks back I told you a story about my carving pass-time. I have learned a lot from that activity, and this story today is one of the deepest lessons, albeit a bit embarrassing.

I was finishing up a sign for a friend, and, as a nicer touch, I decided that part of it would involve inlaying black walnut onto the limewood background. Easy to say but, as it turned out, WAY above my abilities.



The delicate cut, with a small hand jigsaw, was maddeningly difficult, but finally accomplished. Then I went to put it into the carved surface. It was not going well. I hadn't cut it perfectly, so was having to do some hammer 'adjustments'. It went in OK, and I was about to move on.

To be certain, this sign 2x3 feet in size, would be seen at a distance. The 1/16 inch gap would probably never be noticed, except by...

Our 15 year-old son who happened to walk by at that moment. This is a young man who, from some DNA source distant from mine, had natural woodworking and building abilities. He was good then and now, 15 years later, actually works in construction management.

He took a careful look at the carving and the inlay, stepped back, and said, "You happy with that?". Now this was not said in a disrespectful or 'typical teenager' way. Just a somewhat rhetorical question, to which he already knew the answer.

Knowing that I could not let the now-noticed and less-than-ideal work remain, I spent a lot more hours doing more cutting, careful fitting, and ultimately, no putty to fill in the gaps.



And that set a new standard for me, which returns us to the quotes at the beginning of this writing. My carving efforts, up to that point, were "mediocre". My work since then has a new level of expectation, completely self-imposed, and ever higher.

The voice that raised my sights that evening was someone less than half my age. Wisdom and insight come from many sources.

Some questions are appropriate here. Consider the people under your leadership or that are influenced by you. Consider them, one by one, as you answer these questions. If you have many under your stewardship, select a few key players.

1. Who has tasted excellence?
2. How often do they get to share that experience?
3. Who has never left the land of mediocrity?
4. Who is currently in their comfort zone?
5. How often do you focus on excellence with them?
6. What stories do you share with them that communicate excellence?
7. Do they know how you define excellence?
 1. Do you know how they define excellence?
 2. Are you sure?



8. How do you set an environment of excellence?
9. Are the persons described in #3 and #4 above in leadership roles?
 1. How is their lack of excellence affecting others?
 2. How strong is their voice?
 3. Why are they in leadership roles?

These are questions that can be difficult to answer. However, a WOW!-level team does not accept less than excellent, not in outcomes, and certainly not in the thinking and actions that precede them.





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