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Dear Reader,

A new year begins, and we thought that nothing could be more appropriate than giving some thoughts to our goals, our purpose. In this issue we are presenting an interview with Sharon Lamm, a Learning Coach from our network who has developed a special approach to help leaders discover their personal leadership purpose. We hope it inspires you to review (or discover) your own one!

Enjoy the reading!

Isabel Rimanoczy
Editor

Quote of the Month

"The sooner you dream your future, the earlier you get it"

Uncle Wilbur



Issue 53

The LIM Newsletter

January 2005

LEADERSHIP PURPOSE

Interview with Sharon Lamm

LIM News: *How do you define Leadership Purpose?*

First, I would like say a word about the term "leadership". There are so many definitions of leadership and it is a highly personal and complex term. The way I define leadership is "authentic self-

expression that creates value." I believe leadership takes place in the home (e.g., parent, caretaker), in our community (e.g., board member, team coach) and in the workplace (e.g., consultant, executive, employee). Part of authentic self-expression is connecting with who you truly are and leading from that place.

Having clarified that, I view **leadership purpose** as your unique reason for choosing to be a leader. It is your unique way of creating value by expressing your gifts.

Using the metaphor of a lighthouse is useful in describing leadership purpose. One of the most important things a leader does is to navigate change, and many times when we are in the middle of a change process or going through a transition, we find ourselves in the fog. We can't see where we came from or where we are going. In the fog, leadership purpose can be our lighthouse that reminds us why we are doing what we are doing and helps us to re-center and re-focus.

LIM News: *Can you give an example?*

Sure. For example, one of my coaching client's purpose is "as a respected and confident catalyst and transformer, I create a harmonious and evolving organization by envisioning, communicating and creating the future." She is an executive change agent at a major pharmaceutical company. Before she knew her purpose, she was thinking about leaving the organization because she would fight the resistance that is part of managing change. This "fighting" would leave her exhausted and stressed. Now that she is connected with her purpose, when she encounters resistance and gets into the fog, she uses her purpose to stay centered on *why* she is doing what she does and to ride out and facilitate the waves of resistance that are part of any change process.

LIM News: *Why is it important to have a purpose?*

Have you ever had one of those days where you just got back in town from traveling, you are jet-lagged, you have 20 messages on your cell phone which won't stop ringing, and 200 e-mails to review? Perhaps on a day like this, you have said to yourself, "WHY do I do this?"

When you are connected with your purpose, you can answer that question, clearly. Your purpose can motivate and energize you. I believe you are the happiest, most successful and most productive when you are connected with your purpose. Either you know it or you don't.

YOU KNOW IT	YOU DON'T
Focused and prioritized	Scattered
Motivated and energized	Something is missing -- Restless
Centered -- lighthouse	Stressed
Efficient	Searching

However, having said this, there is the irony that it is sometimes a blessing to be scattered, restless, stressed and searching because it is often in these times of hardship that we learn most about who we truly are^[1].

LIM News: *How did you come to the "leadership purpose" idea?*

After I graduated with my Doctorate from Columbia University, I received awards and amazing career opportunities around the world. However, there was a key problem. I was going through a divorce, had Lyme disease, and had no clue who I was or why I was doing what I do. I was lost. So I turned down a lot of these opportunities, and went into searching.

One day I was driving down the road and saw an 'office for rent' sign; my intuition pulled me in to look at the office. I rented the office and I had no idea what I would do there. I wish I would have given myself permission to simply explore or experiment but I wanted to know and I wanted to know "now". I mention this because many times people who are in an exploratory phase or experimenting have a hard time allowing themselves to be there...and when we are finding our purpose we often have to allow these times of exploration and experimentation (versus fighting them).

I started coaching CEO's, executives, professionals and entrepreneurs. One day I was coaching an amazing successful business woman who owned her own business but was passionless. She identified her greatest leadership gift as facilitating creative expression. She had a moment of insight when she said there was no way she could truly express her passion in her current business. She sold her business, opened a creativity consulting business and was accepted into one of the finest art schools in Philadelphia – and she is loving it. I remember feeling so happy when I saw her connect with her purpose. In fact, I felt chills and since I am a "recovering intellectual", having a feeling was a big deal for me. I realized this was my passion and my leadership purpose is to create a passionately alive and fun world by helping leaders connect with their purpose, remember who they truly are and express themselves in ways that create value.

Now I have coaching clients worldwide, I teach and I do my work with purpose – clear on why I do what I do. When we are connected with our purpose, we are better leaders, better practitioners, and better human beings.

LIM News: *Does your purpose change as you grow?*

Of course. Our leadership purpose can change with the ebb and flow of our life. I have a couple of retired CEO's as clients who now want to express themselves in leaving a conscious legacy. Their leadership purpose is different than it was when they were leading their companies. They have made the switch, by discovering their greatest leadership gift.

LIM News: *What do you mean by 'greatest leadership gift'?*

We each have many leadership gifts and talents. However, there is often one that is the greatest gift you have to give as a leader. It is how you express your uniqueness as a leader. For example, one global executive (Paul – a pseudonym) I work with discovered that his greatest leadership gift is to encourage and facilitate innovative thinking. Before he had clarity on this, he compared himself to his predecessor (Mark – a pseudonym) whose greatest gift was to connect with others. Paul always felt inadequate because he could not connect with others like Mark could.

When Paul connected with his greatest gift, he began to really focus on encouraging and facilitating innovative thinking. Amazingly he also began to connect with others more because he was being his authentic self versus trying to be like Mark. This has transformed how Paul works, how he runs meetings and his relationships with others.

LIM News: *How can we discover our greatest leadership gift?*

There are three steps to connecting with your greatest leadership gift:

- 1) Reflect on what people have consistently appreciated about you (e.g. "you are such a great listener," "you always know just the right thing to say," etc.)
- 2) Reflect on what you always wanted to receive from a leader. This is one of the greatest paradoxes because what we most want to receive from a leader is often what we most have to **give** as a leader. For example, I always wanted my leaders to help me see and express my unique talents and gifts, and this is what I most have to give to others as a leader.
- 3) Combine #1 and #2 into a statement that describes your greatest gift.

For example, one executive client at a financial services company said his greatest gift is "to encourage and facilitate strategic thinking to help create the envisioned future." Now before he goes into a meeting, he always asks himself, how can I encourage and facilitate strategic thinking toward our envisioned future? This has transformed the way in which he conducts his meetings, and is known as 'the facilitator of strategic thinking'.

LIM News: *How is it manifested in interaction with others, if one has or hasn't discovered their leadership purpose?*

Those leaders who are not connected with their purpose, often seem scattered. In fact, Paul the leader I mentioned above was often labeled as indecisive, aloof, and cold before he got in touch with his purpose. After he was clear that he wanted to be seen as a model leader, creating a fun and productive environment through facilitating innovative thinking, perceptions began to change. He is now surer of himself on the inside and as a result, people are more confident in his abilities on the outside. This is what I call "leadership from the inside out".

LIM News: *Would you say that the 'leadership purpose' for non-leaders is their 'personal mission in life?'*

Yes I suppose you could say that, and the difference is that leadership purpose is your purpose for leading – why you chose to be a leader and your uniqueness as a leader. I see a personal life mission as more broad. And I suppose a more philosophical question to ponder is, "Who is a non-leader?"

LIM News: *What questions should I ask myself to find out if I have a valid leadership purpose?*

I facilitate four exercises that help leaders connect with their leadership purpose. While it is too much to share all the exercises here, you can begin reflecting on qualities you admire in other leaders, so one question you could ask yourself is whether you have accepted these qualities in yourself? Next, you select leadership roles you are passionate about playing – so a question you could ask yourself is "are you passionate about the leadership roles you play? And if not, why not? And what changes do you need to make?" The following step is to define the ideal environment that you want your leadership to create. Here you can ask yourself "how am I doing in creating this environment?" Finally, you look for your greatest leadership gift which we spoke about above. You can ask yourself – "Do I know my greatest leadership gift and how can I express it even more?"

LIM News: *Thank you! I'm sure many of our readers will try it out!*



Dr. Sharon Lamm is a LIM certified Learning Coach and is CEO of Inside Out Learning, Inc. and an Adjunct Faculty Member at Columbia University and the Center for Creative Leadership. She is an award winning coach and was quoted for her views on coaching in Oprah's magazine – O magazine. She can be reached at Sharon@InsideOutLearningInc.com or www.insideoutlearninginc.com

[1] The Center for Creative Leadership developed the concept of developing from hardships



LEADERSHIP IN INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT

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