

Lecture Text

Joseph L. Badaracco, Jr.: Leading Quietly*

Now what I'm going to do today is talk for a while about research I've done over the last five years and completed with the publication of a book by that title: *Leading Quietly*. What I set out to do initially was to see what I could learn about leadership and effective leadership, if I looked beyond, if I looked away from, what I'll call the heroic model.

And the heroic model is one that, with the briefest sketch, is familiar to all of us. Who are heroic leaders? They are people who change the world or part of the world, they've got very strong values, they are charismatic, they are inspiring, they are willing to make sacrifices, sometimes, in some walks of life, the ultimate sacrifice, because they sacrificed their lives.

I have no intention, here today or at any point, in tearing down all that the great figures have contributed to our world. Without them, our world would be a poorer and meaner place. Without them, we wouldn't have examples of courage to talk to our kids and to others about. But the proposition I want to put in front of you today is that viewing leadership, particularly leadership in organizations, particularly in the middle of big, complicated business organizations, simply in terms of heroism, is a limited and sometimes even misleading perspective.

Let me say a little bit more about why I think that's the case. I think there are at least three problems with this heroic view. One of them I call the pyramid issue. If you think about the world in terms of heroes, you tend to have in the back of your mind a big triangle, and at the top you've got great leaders, and at the bottom, fill in your favorite candidates, the skunks, bottom-dwelling slugs, T.S. Eliot's hollow men. What about everybody else who is in the middle? People who are neither out saving the world like great heroes, saving companies, saving brands, nor are they exploiting it. They are doing their jobs, living their lives, taking care of the people around them. The heroic model doesn't say much about them.

The second problem with the heroic model was expressed in the Burke videotape. He said, "I never had any trouble telling right from wrong." And I think that is fundamentally right because there are so many situations, as you know, when this is right and this is wrong, and the task is not to figure out what is the right thing to do, it's to get yourself or other people to move in that direction rather than this one.

But there are a whole set of messy, complicated problems that I refer to as right versus right problems that do not fit the simple, heroic, do-the-right-thing model. Let me give you an example.

* Edited for clarity

全国Mini-MBA职业经理双证班



精品课程 权威双证 全国招生 请速充电

你可能准备跳槽或者求职, 却为缺少行业经验和专业证书而被用人单位百般挑惕!

你可能目前衣食无忧, 但随着年龄的增长和社会竞争压力的增大, 因为得不到专业的全新培训而失去竞争的机会和面临被淘汰的危机。

美华教育携手中国经济管理大学面向全国举办迷你 MBA 职业经理双证书班, 毕业颁发双证书。

招生专业及其颁发证书

| 认证项目 | 颁发双证 | 学费 |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|--------|
| 全国《职业经理》MBA 高等教育双证书班 | 高级职业经理资格证书+2 年制 MBA 高等教育研修结业证书 | 1280 元 |
| 全国《人力资源总监》MBA 双证书班 | 高级人力资源总监职业经理资格证书+2 年制 MBA 高等教育研修证书 | 1280 元 |
| 全国《生产经理》MBA 高等教育双证班 | 高级生产管理职业经理资格证书+2 年制 MBA 高等教育研修结业证书 | 1280 元 |
| 全国《品质经理》MBA 高等教育双证班 | 高级品质管理职业经理资格证书+2 年制 MBA 高等教育研修结业证书 | 1280 元 |
| 全国《营销经理》MBA 高等教育双证班 | 高级营销经理资格证书+2 年制 MBA 高等教育研修结业证书 | 1280 元 |
| 全国《物流经理》MBA 高等教育双证班 | 高级物流管理职业经理资格证书+2 年制 MBA 高等教育结业证书 | 1280 元 |
| 全国《项目经理》MBA 高等教育双证班 | 高级项目管理职业经理资格证书+2 年制 MBA 高等教育研修结业证书 | 1280 元 |
| 全国《市场总监》MBA 高等教育双证书班 | 高级市场总监职业经理资格证书+2 年制 MBA 高等教育研修结业证书 | 1280 元 |
| 全国《酒店经理》MBA 高等教育双证班 | 高级酒店管理职业经理资格证书+2 年制 MBA 高等教育研修结业证书 | 1280 元 |
| 全国《企业培训师》MBA 高等教育双证班 | 企业培训师高级资格认证毕业证书+2 年制 MBA 高等教育研修证书 | 1280 元 |
| 全国《财务总监》MBA 高等教育双证班 | 高级财务总监职业经理资格证书+2 年制 MBA 高等教育研修结业证书 | 1280 元 |
| 全国《营销策划师》MBA 双证书班 | 高级营销策划师高级资格认证证书+2 年制 MBA 高等教育研修证书 | 1280 元 |
| 全国《企业总经理》MBA 高等教育双证班 | 全国企业总经理高级资格证书+2 年制 MBA 高等教育研修结业证书 | 1280 元 |
| 全国《行政总监》MBA 高等教育双证班 | 高级行政总监职业经理资格证书+2 年制 MBA 高等教育结业证书 | 1280 元 |
| 全国《采购经理》MBA 高等教育双证班 | 高级采购管理职业经理资格证书+2 年制 MBA 高等教育结业证书 | 1280 元 |
| 全国《IE 工业工程管理》MBA 双证班 | 高级 IE 工业工程师职业资格证书+2 年制 MBA 高等教育结业证书 | 1280 元 |
| 全国《企业管理咨询师》MBA 双证班 | 高级企业管理咨询师资格证书+2 年制 MBA 高等教育结业证书 | 1280 元 |



【授课方式】 全国招生、函授学习、权威双证

我校采用国际通用3结合的先进教育方式授课：远程函授+视频光盘+网络学院在线辅导（集中面授）



【颁发证书】 学员毕业后可以获取权威双证书与全套学员学籍档案

- 1、毕业后可以获取相应专业钢印《高级职业经理资格证书》；
- 2、毕业后可以获取2年制的《MBA研究生课程高等教育研修结业证书》；



【证书说明】

- 1、证书加盖中国经济管理大学钢印和公章（学校官方网站电子注册查询、随证书带整套学籍档案）；
- 2、毕业获取的证书与面授学员完全一致，无“函授”字样，与面授学员享有同等待遇，证书是学员求职、提干、晋级的有效证明。



【学习期限】 3个月（允许有工作经验学员提前毕业，毕业获取证书后学校仍持续辅导2年）



【收费标准】 全部费用1280元（含教材光盘、认证辅导、注册证书、学籍注册等全部费用）

函授学习为你节省了大量的宝贵的学习时间以及昂贵的MBA导师的面授费用，是经理人首选的学习方式。



【招生对象】

- 1、对管理知识感兴趣，具有简单电脑操作能力（有2年以上相应工作经验者可以申请提前毕业）。
- 2、年龄在20—55岁之间的各界管理知识需求者均可报名学习。



【教程特点】

- 1、完全实战教材，注重企业实战管理方法与中国管理背景完美融合，关注学员实际执行能力的培养；
- 2、对学员采用1对1顾问式教学指导，确保学员顺利完成学业、胸有成竹的走向领导岗位；
- 3、互动学习：专家、顾问24小时接受在线教学辅导+每年度集中面授辅导



【考试说明】

1. 卷面考核：毕业试卷是一套完整的情景模拟试卷（与工作相关联的基础问卷）
2. 论文考核：毕业需要提交2000字的论文（学员不需要参加毕业论文答辩但论文中必修体现出5点独特的企业管理心得）
3. 综合心理测评等问卷。



【颁证单位】

中国经济管理大学经中华人民共和国香港特别行政区批准注册成立。目前中国经济管理大学课程涉及国际学位教育、国际职业教育等。学院教学方式灵活多样，注重人才的实际技能的培养，向学员传授先进的管理思想和实际工作技能，学院会永远遵循“科技兴国、严谨办学”的原则不断的向社会提供优秀的管理人才。



【承办单位】

美华管理人才学校是中国最早由教委批准成立的“工商管理MBA实战教育机构”之一，由资深MBA教育培训专家、教育协会常务理事徐传有教授担任学校理事长。迄今为止，已为社会培养各类“能力型”管理人才近10万余人，并为多家企业提供了整合策划和企业内训，连续13年被教委评选为《优秀成人教育学校》《甲级先进办学单位》。办学多年来，美华人独特的教学方法，先进的教学理念赢得了社会各界的高度赞誉和认可。



【咨询电话】13684609885 0451--88342620

【咨询教师】王海涛 郑毅

【学校网站】<http://www.mh.jy.net>

【咨询邮箱】xchy007@163.com



【报名须知】

- 1、报名登记表格下载后详细填写并发邮件至 xchy007@163.com (入学时不需要提交相片，毕业提交试卷同时邮寄4张2寸相片和一张身份证复印件即可)
- 2、交费后请及时电话通知招生办确认，以便于收费当日学校为你办理教材邮寄等入学手续。



【证书样本】(全国招生 函授学习 权威双证 请速充电)

(高级职业经理资格证书样本)

(两年制研究生课程高等教育结业证书样本)



【学费缴纳方式】(请携带本人身份证到银行办理交费手续，部分银行需要查验办理者身份证)

| | | |
|-----|----------------|--|
| 方式一 | 学校地址 | <p>邮寄地址：哈尔滨市道外区南马路 120 号职工大学 109 室</p> <p>邮政编码：150020 收件人：王海涛</p> |
| 方式二 | 学校帐号 (企业账户) | <p>学校帐号：184080723702015 账号户名：哈尔滨市道外区美华管理人才学校</p> <p>开户银行：哈尔滨银行中大支行 支付系统行号：313261018018</p> |
| 方式三 | 交通银行 (太平洋卡) | <p>帐号：40551220360141505 户名：王海涛</p> <p>开户行：交通银行哈尔滨分行信用卡中心</p> |
| 方式四 | 邮政储蓄 (存折) | <p>帐号：602610301201201234 户名：王海涛</p> <p>开户行：哈尔滨道外储蓄中心</p> |
| 方式五 | 中国工商银行 (存折) | <p>帐号：3500016701101298023 户名：王海涛</p> <p>开户行：哈尔滨市道外区靖宇支行</p> |
| 方式六 | 建设银行帐户 (存折) | <p>中国人民建设银行帐户(存折)： 1141449980130106399</p> <p>用户名：王海涛</p> |
| 方式七 | 农业银行帐户 (卡号) | <p>农业银行帐户(卡号)： 6228480170232416918 用户名：王海涛</p> <p>农行卡开户银行：中国农业银行黑龙江分行营业部道外支行景阳支行</p> |
| 方式八 | 招商银行 (卡号) | <p>招商银行帐户(卡号)： 6225884517313071 用户名：王海涛</p> <p>招商银行卡开户银行：招商银行哈尔滨分行马迭尔支行</p> |

可以选择任意一种方式缴纳学费，收到学费当天，学校就会用邮政特快的方式为你邮寄教材、考试问卷以及收费票据。

You are at home. It's evening. Someone knocks on your door. It's somebody who works for you, he's worked with you for a number of years. He says, "I'm really sorry to bother you at home, but I've got some really fabulous news." This individual lives just a couple miles away. And he says, "I wanted you to be one of the first to know. My wife and I have been looking for a home and we really think we have found the house of our dreams. It's really expensive, we are going to have to take some money out of the kids' college funds, but this is just a fabulous home, and you know you are my boss, and you are the best boss I've ever had...." I'm sure many of you have had this experience. "The best boss I can even imagine having."

So you nod politely and in the back of your mind you know that there is a layoff coming and that this individual's name is on that list. By buying this house, he's not only putting himself on the brink of financial calamity, he's going to be taking a plunge over it.

Now what do you do? You know the layoff is coming. As a corporate officer, you have a duty of confidentiality to the corporation. You're not supposed to disclose the coming layoffs piecemeal to your friends. That's supposed to be announced when everything is set up legally, when the HR work is done, at a point in time that senior executives decide.

But this person is a friend. You owe this person a lot. Surely you have an obligation, I think, to help them out. And what if the person happens to go a little bit further and says, "Do you think I ought to do this?" And of course what you're thinking is "You're crazy if you do this." And you are supposed to tell the truth, right? This is not a right versus wrong situation. You've got three obligations here: to your friend, to the truth, and the duty of confidentiality to your organization.

You may think this is kind of a made-up story, but in the last eight or ten years or so, even when the U.S. economy was growing slowly in the early 90s and even when it was growing quickly in the late 90s, we had continuous layoffs. I heard four or five versions of this exact story. A good friend, what do you tell them about a layoff when you can't tell them anything prematurely? This is what I would describe as a messy, right versus right kind of problem.

The final thing wrong with the heroic view is that, at bottom, most of us most of the time don't want to be heroes, even think it is irresponsible to act heroically. The saying is that martyrdom is a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

I had a student, an auditor in fact, from the Nieman program, which brings journalists here to Harvard, in my second-year elective course a couple of years ago. The rules for auditors say that you can listen, you can't participate. So we were having a discussion about an organization, it was a mini-Enron, there were lots of things going on that shouldn't have been going on. A young guy knew what was going

on, he had copied some documents. The question was, what he should do? And there was a lot of enthusiasm building up in the class for him to blow the whistle. He had a tennis pal who was a journalist with the local newspaper.

And I was watching this woman sitting over on the side, she was a reporter for a big New York City newspaper, and she was getting really agitated, and you could see her almost physically holding her hand down, because she knew what the rules were but she was going to separate her shoulder or something like that trying to restrain herself. So I called on her and she said, "Listen, what you have to understand is, if you are going to propose blowing the whistle, is that whistleblowers always get screwed." That may be an over-generalization, but life is really tough, at least in this country, for people who blow the whistle. And that's the message she wanted to send.

So you have the problem of the pyramid that leaves most of us out. You've got these messy problems that don't fit into the right versus wrong format, and you've got the fact that most of us want to live to fight another battle. We've got complicated obligations in life, very few people realistically, pragmatically, are going to roll everything up into one big ball and sacrifice it, often no matter how great and how urgent they think the problem is. We might do that for somebody close to us, but would we do it for our organizations? I don't know.

So what I want to do is encourage you for a little while this afternoon to think beyond this model, and it's a very, very powerful model. You've got the great figures of history that we've learned about since we were kids in school. Every walk of life has its heroes. Every business and industry has its heroes...I don't know how many of you have seen the latest *Economist*, the title is "Fallen Idols: The Overthrow of Celebrity CEOs." This looks like one of those statues in East Germany or in Eastern Europe after the breakup of the Soviet Union, down on the ground smashed. The smiling face here is Jack Welch. So we have the celebrity CEOs. Turn on the TV, go to a movie, go see *Spiderman*, it's a relentless diet telling us that the people we really ought to admire and emulate are the folks who do great things, whether it's fighting the mafia, or space aliens—pick your own favorite.

I think in fact that this heroic view is almost—I'm going out on a limb here because I'm hardly a scientist—almost genetically etched in us. A long time ago when somebody in a crowd said, "We'd better go this way because the saber-toothed tigers are going that way," the folks who responded and followed these leaders away from the saber-toothed tigers are the ones who survived, and the ones sitting over there saying, "Well, I'll think it over, we'll see," are the ones who got consumed for lunch.

That's one view. My argument is that it is not the only view. In fact, I want to go a little bit further because the conclusion of the study I did,

and I should tell you a little bit about the study...What I essentially did was gather a lot of case studies, in the end about 150, of people who were typically in the middle of an organization, had a messy, complicated problem, had a significant degree of self-interest, prudent self-preservation, but also wanted to do the right thing for their organizations and for themselves, and I looked at how they resolved their problems.

And I did it pretty systematically. I put them in three categories: people who looked like they were successes, they did the right thing for themselves and their organizations. People who failed, and they often said, "I failed," explained why, and said what they would do differently the next time. And then the muddy cases. And I tried to go through systematically and see what separated the success stories from the others.

And what I want to put in front of you are some basic conclusions about how these people think, how they behave, what they did. And I'll give you some examples and, in fact, I'll even come back to the little anecdote about the "house of my dreams," and tell you a little bit about how you might approach that in this quiet leadership vein.

But the big conclusion I came to is that we really need to look away from the figures on the pedestal, from time to time, maybe quite often, so we can see it's the daily, unglamorous, in-the-trenches quiet leadership that so often is what moves and changes things in organizations.

And I hope to encourage you to think a little bit about the people who work for you, the people you work with, to see if some of them don't fit this model of quiet leadership that I'm describing. See if there's something you can learn from them, and see if, when they work for you, there are ways you can encourage them, support them, help hold them up as examples for people in your organization. As you'll see, quiet leadership can be lonely work. It's out of the spotlight, it's often unrewarded, sometimes it is even unnoticed, it's done by people who are doing something right for themselves, right for the organization, but often there is no one standing by to give them a medal.

Now I did a 150 cases, I'm a professor here at Harvard, but neither of these are reasons you should pay attention to the ideas I'm putting in front of you. Let me give you a more serious and more historically significant way of thinking about this....

This is a quote from Albert Schweitzer. I imagine most of you know who he is. He was born at the end of the 1800s in Germany. He was an astonishingly talented young man. He could have had a career as a theologian. Not just sort of a technical theologian; he was a deeply religious Christian. He was also a brilliantly talented musician. So, he could have had a nice life in Germany following either of those pursuits.

He decided instead to become a medical missionary. He worked in Africa. He won the Nobel Prize in 1952. Took the money, spent it expanding his hospital down there, and stayed in Africa working as a medical missionary until the point when he died. This is what he says. And I think this is a remarkable statement: "Of all the will toward the ideal, all of our highest aspirations, only a small part of it can manifest itself in public action. All the rest of this force must be content with"—notice that phrase—"small and obscure deeds. The sum of these, however, is"—notice again how strongly he puts this—"a thousand times stronger than the acts of those who receive wide public recognition." These folks who get the recognition compared to the former are "like the foam on the waves of a deep ocean."

This is someone who is a heroic leader, by so many standards, basically saying, don't pay a lot of attention to people like himself. Look elsewhere—look at the people engaged in these small and obscure deeds.

So, what I'd like to do now is spend the remaining time, maybe fifty minutes or so, telling you a little bit about these quiet leaders: What I looked at, what I learned, how they think, and what they do.

I summarize this in the form of seven lessons. Let me say a little bit about each one of these. The first thing about these people is they don't kid themselves.

What they don't kid themselves about is how much they know, how much of what goes on around them they can control, how far they can see down the road. This is true even when people had titles like CEO, like general manager, like plant manager. They had a sense of the fragility, the uncertainty, the tentativeness of almost everything.

Now, of course, for Americans, and the Americans in this room, you know we had our Internet bubble blow up and then collapse. And for so many people in the world after September 11th, maybe these reminders of the fragility of things are not as necessary as they were a few years ago, at least in this country, when it looked like we had sort of a lock on everything.

Machiavelli says somewhere in *The Prince* that "fortune is basically the equivalent of a great powerful river." And what human beings are doing is building little structures on the side of the river. And he says, of all the things that happen, about half of it is under our control. The rest is the plaything of this great force, this river he talks about. You take all the precautions you can. You build the dykes. "But, at the end of the day," he says, "it's only 50/50. About half of this is out of your hands."

These folks I looked at had sort of a permanent view that they were likely to be surprised. That the future, whatever it might hold, was made up of multiple alternative scenarios. The future, no matter how hard and smart their efforts were, could easily come up from behind and sort of bite them in the posterior. They were also political realists about their organizations. They didn't kid themselves about other people's motives. They knew that in any organization, there are some people who are basically in it for themselves.

They also didn't kid themselves about the fact that most organizations are organized like pyramids—a lot of the goodies go to the people at the top, and lots of smart, ambitious people are trying to get hold of those goodies. They realize that organizations tend to be organized on the basis of insiders and outsiders. Insiders tend to take care of themselves; lots of outsiders are trying to get in. In other words, I'm not talking about saints, social workers, would-be martyrs, folks who are holier than thou. In fact, I'm talking about people—and I'll spend a little more time on this in a moment—who are quite eager to get higher pay, promotions, and make their way up to the top of the greasy pole. They did not kid themselves about how the world worked.

But, there's one other element that I want to add to this basic idea of, "don't kid yourself." These folks were not cynics. When I mention things like the politics, the competition that takes place in any organization, it's easy for you to think when I say, "Don't kid yourself," that I'm talking about the sort of Machiavellian maxim, "Do unto others before they do unto you." That's not what I'm talking about. And that's not the way these people thought.

They were realists. They expected to be surprised. And they were just as likely, they thought, to be surprised by good things as by bad things. In other words, pessimistic, dark-tinted glasses are just as distorting as naïve, pink-tinted glasses. These folks tried to see the world for what it was. They recognized that people do things for all sorts of reasons. People who you don't expect—who are almost at the bottom of the list of people to show up when times get tough and there were things in organizations that really needed doing—sometimes surprised them.

The second basic trait I found, I summarize this way...these people trusted their motives, even when their motives were mixed. Let me explain that a little bit.

The heroic view tends to say that great leaders are motivated by altruism, by idealism, by the highest and most noble instincts you can imagine. By the way, that's what makes it so easy for biographers—and this has been fashionable for about twenty or thirty years now—to write biographies of great leaders in which they point out that they were actually motivated by human, even low, motives: ambition,

pride. And often did some things that even these leaders themselves are hardly proud of. But that's only because we have a kind of false conception of what it really is that makes human beings tick.

As I said a moment ago, the quiet leaders that I looked at, that I talked with, that I thought about, they liked bigger paychecks rather than smaller paychecks. They preferred to have more people reporting to them than fewer. They wanted to have long, successful careers in their organizations or, if that didn't work out, in other organizations. And when they found themselves in one of these messy, complicated problems, one of the things they thought about, and thought a lot about, was their own careers and their own reputation.

"If I am not for myself, who will be for me?" You can get stranded alone out there. Who is going to take care of you? "If I am only for myself, purely, unalloyedly self-interested, what am I?" This is what I mean by mixed motives.

And I want to go a little further than this to say why these mixed motives are so important. Let me give you an example of a senior marketing rep. This is somebody who is a little surprising because he had lots of opportunities to move into management but never took them. He really loved sales. He worked for a big American pharmaceutical company, and it had a terrific product for a fairly common form of mental illness. I don't want to point fingers at any particular company.

It turned out that this product had a second use, one that the Food and Drug Administration had not approved. It worked really well for losing weight. And some doctors were actually prescribing it for people who needed diets, not treatment from depression. And the company caught on to this, and it organized an unwritten, undocumented marketing campaign to encourage more of its reps to get out there and sell the product for this unregulated, unapproved use.

This guy, whom I will call Elliott Cortez, wanted to get ahead, like most of the people I looked at. He went along with the program. So, he'd meet with doctors. He'd describe to them that it could be used for diet. He'd fill prescriptions. But, for some reason, I don't know what it was, he began after time to get a little uncomfortable about this. Then a little more uncomfortable about it.

And finally what did he do? He decided he was going to stop doing this. And he went around to the doctors to whom he'd been pushing or promoting his product for diet purposes, told them he was going to stop doing that, and explained why. He told a couple of other sales reps he was going to do the same thing. And he told his boss.

I don't know what the initial trigger was that got him to do this stuff. But I later asked him why, once he was alerted to the problem, he went and did all of this. And he said, "Well, to be honest, there were really two things. I came to realize, first of all, that some people could get sick with the misuse of this product. And I realized secondly, given the scale of the campaign that this company was waging, unapproved and unregulated, that the company could get in a whole lot of trouble. And who was going to get the bull's-eye painted on them? When the time came, it would be the reps and the marketing execs who were out promoting this unapproved product. And I did not want to get hung out to dry."

Now, what do you make of this story? It's kind of an interesting one to talk about. Is this heroic leadership? Not by any standard. This guy was very careful. What motivated him? He didn't want people to get sick as a result of what he was doing. But he also didn't want to get himself in trouble. His motives were quite mixed. You might ask yourself, wouldn't it have been better if he had blown the whistle, if he had dropped a dime, called the FDA, photographed some papers and sent them off? Who was going to win that uneven competition between a giant pharmaceutical company and a lonely rep? It's a no-brainer. The company would have won.

So he made the sensible decision not to blow himself up in place. But, he did something. He didn't do everything; he did something. Within the little sphere where he reasonably could have some influence, and maybe set an example—the doctors, a few other sales reps and his boss—he explained to them what he was doing and why he was doing it.

What if his motives had been purer? What if he didn't have the self-preservation instinct? I would argue he would not have done so well. A lot of cases of quiet leadership that I looked at are much more like distance runs than glamorous 50-yard, 100-yard sprints in front of a cheering crowd. And what often matters is not the purity of your motives, but the strength of your motives. You've got to have some skin in the game. And part of the reason he went around and did what he could is because he did not want to end up in court, in the press, on TV, in the event things came down on his company. His motives were mixed. And my argument is that he was probably much more effective as a result of that.

There's so many fascinating studies coming out now, the folks who do mind/body research. And what many of these studies tend to find is that our minds do far more processing and analyzing of reality pre-consciously, unconsciously, than anybody ever realized. And often this analysis, this analytical work that's done by these deep levels of our mind, doesn't express itself in rational linear thinking. It expresses itself in feelings, in hesitation. If you're facing one of these messy

problems, don't think you've got to be General Patton or some other charge-the-hill hero. If something inside you is saying "slow down, slow down," trust those mixed motives. That's the second trait that I found among these people.

The third thing these folks did was buy time. Sometimes they begged, sometimes they borrowed. I'll come to this in a moment. Sometimes they played games. They stole a little time. They did exactly the reverse of what so many American managers were told to do just a couple of years ago. Remember the mantra about Internet time? And instead of this sort of old-fashioned ready, aim, fire, the new mantra was fire, ready, aim. Because the world was moving so fast.

Now, in retrospect, you can see that for the monstrously bad advice it was. Hundreds of billions of dollars were thrown away by folks trying to seize opportunities on Internet time. The only thing that actually moved on Internet time was the Internet bubble itself, which rose and collapsed pretty much on the Internet time schedule.

That said, the folks who were telling us that things were different were right about something else. Because they frequently reminded us that the world was getting to be a more complicated place. Business was becoming globally deregulated; you know all the rest of that sort of story. Why they went on to say that as the world got more complicated, you ought to make decisions faster and faster, I don't know. But, they were right about the ever-growing complexity of situations that people faced.

Taking their advice, however, doing things on Internet time, basically made them a candidate for an award that medical schools give out occasionally. It's the SSW award. It stands for "swift, sure, and wrong."

The quiet leaders I looked at found ways to take time to get decisions right. They didn't make their decisions on the basis of external pressures. They made their decisions when they were ready to make the decisions. Now, that may sound to you like a kind of naïve, academic, ivory tower piece of advice, because all of you have about twenty-eight times more things to do than you've got time to do them. And typically, the In basket is a lot bigger than the Out basket. And I understand that.

But, when you get one of these messy, complicated sorts of problems, you have a sense that it's got ramifications, ripple effects leading throughout the organization, you've got to find the time. And you've got to take the time to get things right.

There was a fascinating article, an interview about six weeks ago in the *New York Times* with Joseph Murray, a now-retired surgeon who

lives in a suburb of Boston. He was a pioneer in kidney transplantation. And he used to have a slogan up in his operating room, and the slogan said, "If the operation is difficult, you're not doing it right."

And what he meant by that was, before you do something, especially something pioneering, like taking a kidney out of one person and putting it into another, you better make sure you've imagined all the steps and all the possible scenarios. And what does that take? That takes time. Quiet leaders find ways to get the time they need.

Quiet leaders also learn some lessons from investment bankers and venture capitalists. They invest wisely. Now, let me tell you a little bit about what I mean by "invest wisely." Sometimes professors here give their students a little bit of advice at the end of the course, which is that what they ought to do is get themselves some "go to hell" money. This is money you keep in fairly liquid form in the event that you just can't take it anymore wherever you're working. Then you don't have to keep that job. You can get another job, but you've got a cushion. It makes perfect sense. That's not exactly the kind of thing I'm talking about here.

I'm talking about investing something that is far more important to careers and far less tangible, much more subtle than just money. I'm talking about political capital, a composite of two things. It's your actual track record, and it's your reputation: what people, especially influential people in an organization, think about your track record. So, it's those two things.

The quiet leaders I looked at, I'm only exaggerating a little bit, when they came upon these sort of messy problems, they thought about them like venture capitalists. They asked themselves, "How much political capital do I have? How much am I going to put at risk? What kind of returns am I going to get? And when am I going to get those returns?"

In an ideal world, they looked for ways to handle these problems, even if there was some initial investment or a risk of their political capital. In the end they got back out even more than they put in. As I said, they weren't looking to be martyrs or saints. Like venture capitalists, they often invested their political capital, and I'll say more about this in a moment, in increments. They took small steps. They nudged a little bit. They escalated gradually to get a feel for what was going on, to learn a little bit more. If things looked bad, they'd back off and they'd move in another direction. If things looked good, they would invest a little bit more. They were very pragmatic people.

They were looking for what was attainable. They were sort of following, without ever having heard it, this French maxim, which is

"the better is the enemy of the good." Try to find something in this complicated, shifting, uncertain world that will work.

Now, keep in mind what I said earlier, that they cared about getting these things right, and they were tenacious people. So, when they looked for ways to invest capital, they weren't looking for your savings bond investment where you put in some money and you get an absolute guarantee of four or five percent. They were willing to take some risks, willing to shake the tree a little bit, willing to use some imagination, but they were concerned about the art of the feasible, the art of the practical. And they picked their battles.

There were some cases where they said with regret, "Something was going on over here, and I just didn't want to get involved. I don't think I could get involved. If I had gotten involved, I would not have been able to make a difference. And so with regrets, I moved on." Now that is not the heroic charge-the-hill, all purpose do-gooder approach to getting things done in organizations. But many of these people felt—and you can judge for yourself whether you think they were thinking soundly or not—that they had to pick their battles because they wanted to live to fight another day. And they wanted to move up in their organizations where they would have even more influence.

There's a wonderful statement of Machiavelli's: "A man who has no position in society cannot even get a dog to bark at him." That means you're invisible. "A man who has no position in society." If you want to make a difference, you've got to be a player at the table. And not just once, but several times, again and again and again over a career, and at smaller and smaller tables. And that's what these folks were thinking. A limited amount of political capital—they wanted to build it. They invested it carefully, with some imagination, with some care, but they invested it carefully.

The fifth thing I found was this—which may not be intuitively obvious to all of you. Let me give you a little bit of background, a little bit of Harvard University lore. In the mid-1800s there was an ichthyologist named Louis Agassiz. Ichthyologists study fish. And he got to be a very important person, not just in his field, but nationally. Why? Well, in the mid-1800s Darwin and people who looked at fish fossils supposedly had something to say about whether God did it, or whether it was the unfolding of an evolutionary process.

He was also a brilliant researcher and scholar. And so for a variety of reasons his lab attracted the best and brightest. The tale has been told many times. When graduate students came to work at his lab the first day and he'd say, "It's really great to have you here. Here's what I want you to do." He gave them a little tray. And the tray would have on it an ordinary fish. He'd say, "I want you to go and look at this fish

and then come back in a little while and tell me what you see about the fish." So, they'd go off.

And when would they come back? A half hour, an hour, and knock on the door. And kind of eager, they'd have some things to report. He said, "No, I want you to go and look at the fish." So, they'd come back at lunchtime. "Go back and look at the fish." At the end of the day, same routine. Even at the end of the week. And they had ice in those days, but these fish were probably getting a little funky. It was only after two or three weeks that Agassiz would say, "Come in and tell me about the fish."

What he was trying to inculcate in them is the habit of discipline: focused, consistent, penetrating powers of observation. Looking and looking and looking and looking. As you move into more and more complicated general management situations, there are just more layers there. There's more to see. There's more to understand: There's more to understand technically, there's more to understand politically, there's more to understand financially. And if you've got general management responsibility, you've got to bring that together.

These folks that I looked at bought time. And in the process of investing carefully, they spent lots of time living with, sleeping with, and sweating over their problems. They really worked and worked their problems. And it was often only at the end of this effort to drill down that they had the creative breakthroughs that were critical.

Let me give you a list of names here: Darwin Smith, George Cain, Alan Wurtzel. Am I ringing any bells? Colman Mockler? It's interesting, there's a book that I suspect that many of you have heard of, and maybe a number of you have read, called *Good to Great* by Jim Collins. He did a big statistical sample and found about twenty companies that had been doing terribly for fifteen years and then, for the subsequent fifteen years, outperformed the market by a factor of three. And he went in and studied their executives to try to find out what happened, how these companies were turned around.

Darwin Smith was at Kimberly-Clark, Colman Mockler was at Gillette, George Cain was at Abbott Labs, and Alan Wurtzel was at Circuit City. All companies you've heard of, all companies that have had spectacular long runs after these turnarounds. Collins notes about these people that they spent their whole careers in their industries, if not in their companies. Talk about drilling down, looking at your fish. They knew these businesses from the bottom up, from the inside out. And Collins's conclusion, not mine, was that this intimate sort of knowledge was what enabled them to accomplish all of what they did.

I heard a talk by somebody who was getting an award for outstanding leadership a couple of months ago. He used an interesting phrase. He

said, "I didn't really realize I was a leader." He said, "I was working too hard to lead." A lot of the heroic stuff that you hear about sounds kind of glamorous. The message of this drill down stuff is, look at your fish: It can be pretty tough.

Come back to that little example I gave you at the beginning. This long-term co-worker and friend comes to you saying, "I found the house of my dreams," what are you going to do? The easy way out of that situation is, don't look for wiggle room, stick to the rules. And remember, we had three rules you could apply. You had the rule of the duty of confidentiality. And so what do you say to your friend? "Great. That's fabulous, congratulations. I wish you and your family the best." And you try to paste a smile on your face that doesn't look too fake, because you know you're helping to send him over the precipice.

Or, you say, simple rule, tell the truth. So you blurt out the truth. And you swear this person to confidence, of course. And you hope that the old piece of advice that says, "Best friends only tell their own best friends" doesn't come into play. And you haven't violated confidentiality, and you're not going to get in trouble for it. OK?

Or you say, "This is my friend. Friends have to help friends. There's going to be a layoff and your name is on it." I would argue that in a case like that, following the rules is hardly leadership, barely ethical. You've got to find a way to have a little bit of wiggle room. Following the rules in a world full of rules, and oft-conflicting rules, can be a cop-out.

The final little piece of advice here is to create compromises. The quiet leaders I looked at were really good at compromising. That's probably not leadership—that's what politicians do. You know, that's what you do when you go to a car dealer. And you say, "This is a piece of junk. I'll give you \$10,000 dollars." The car dealer says, "It's appraised \$20,000 dollars." You agree on \$15,000. That's a capitalist act between consenting adults. That doesn't sound like it has anything to do with leadership, morality, what's good for an organization. And that's right.

Although I have to say that, in some of these cases, these folks who were really committed to doing what was best for their organization and for themselves realized that after digging down, after trying to be creative, after thinking like venture capitalists a little bit, they could go so far and go no further, and they compromised. There's this Country Western song that says, "sometimes you're the windshield, sometimes you're the bug." Sometimes you're the bug: you stop. But the important word there is the word "create," not the word "compromise." Because what the best people did was find a way to rethink, to reconfigure a situation, so it didn't look like zero-sum, I

win/you lose. So, there was another way of thinking about the whole thing so that they could go forward.

I want to give you an example that's not a quiet leadership example. It's a heroic leadership example. And it involves Abraham Lincoln, who was not simply an American hero, but in many ways is in the pantheon of world heroes.

In 1858 Lincoln was running for senator, and he would have the same problem when he ran for president. The great problem in America at that time was, should we have slavery in the Northwest Territories? Should the territories be free, or should they have slaves? And Lincoln did not want to take a stand on that issue. In his heart, most people believe, at the time he opposed slavery. But he was an ambitious politician. His best friend said about Lincoln after died that he had a little engine of ambition that would never stop ticking. So, what would Lincoln do? What could he do? If he said he opposed slavery in the Northwest Territories, all the votes in the South would be lost to him in his running for president. If he supported slavery, he would lose the abolitionist vote in the North.

Lincoln came up with the following answer. He said, "I oppose slavery in the Northwest Territories because it is unfair. Who is it unfair to? It is unfair to free white men who may want to migrate to the Northwest Territories to build careers. Why is it unfair to them? Because slavery is unfair economic competition. And free white men (i.e., the voters I'm seeking) should not have to face that kind of competition."

Now, if we had more time, we could discuss this at some length. I will say, quite plainly though, that had Lincoln not come up with this tactic, which was described as one of the most brilliant pieces of political strategy or propaganda in American history, he would be an obscure, unknown Illinois politician. He could not have been elected otherwise. The Civil War might have turned out differently. What was one country might have been two. You can speculate about when or whether the Emancipation Proclamation would have been issued.

What Lincoln did was take what looked like a win/lose, either/or situation and recast it.

Let me come back and close off by talking about the "home of my dreams" case.

My hunch is that the vast majority of you in that situation would do something like the following. And this is what the people I've run into have actually done. It looks like you're on the hook. Either you say congratulations or else you say, "Look, I've got to warn you."

In one case I asked somebody point blank, "What did you do?" And he said, "What I did, I don't know if it's the right thing or not, but I said, 'Look, there are a lot of layoffs now in some of our competing firms, and I wouldn't be surprised if we had some here. Are you really sure you want to get that far out on a limb?'"

Now, is that heroism? Of course not. Is it leadership? Well, you're trying to make a difference in this person's life. You're not trying to make the decision for him, and you can't make the decision for him by telling him what's going to happen. You're trying to get him to think a little bit. And often that's what quiet leaders do. Instead of telling people the answer, they find ways to get other people to think a little bit. It's creative. It's a way of finding a little wiggle room. You're not the hero who's saving this person, this family. You're not the corporate hero maintaining the duty of confidentiality. You can judge for yourself. But I take it as a way of imaginatively and quickly, on the spot, recasting the situation.

Let me summarize just very briefly. I don't think quiet leadership is the only way. There's lots of situations where what needs to be done is clear. And you've got to get it done, or you get it done through other people. And I don't mean to detract for a moment from the great heroes who have made the world a much better place.

But I am saying that we need a broader view, and I'm encouraging you to look in your organizations for people who don't make noise, who you may not have noticed, who tend to operate quietly, behind the scenes, without asking a lot for themselves, but who are the kind of unseen cogs and gears that keep people going. People who, when they face, not a big problem that everybody gets excited about, but an everyday problem, bring to it a little extra effort, a little more care, a little more imagination, a little more analysis. These little brush strokes cumulatively make things a much better place. I'm suggesting you look for them, try to learn from them, and even try to reward them.

One quiet leader used a phrase that actually ended up as the cover art in my book; you see those footprints over there on the side. He said what quiet leaders try to do is they try to leave a trace on the beach. And I really like that phrase, because it captures a degree of modesty. We're not trying to change the world. It captures a degree of realism. The waves and the wind will come and wash away stuff on the beach. But despite that, these folks are determined. They're tenacious. They look for ways to get the things done that need to be done. So they are willing to leave traces on the beach, even though these are only traces. Put differently, they care about small things. And that's the final thing I want to say, both about quiet leaders and, as kind of a caution or asterisk about great leaders and the heroic approach: that it tends to distort your view.

The last thing I want to put up is a quote from a remarkable but little known American named Bruce Barton. He started a big advertising firm. He ran for Congress. He was a very successful writer at the end of his life on religious subjects. And this is what he said:

"Sometimes when I consider what tremendous consequences come from little things, a chance word, a tap on the shoulder, or a penny dropped at a newsstand, I am tempted to think that there are no little things."

That, I think, is almost the diametrically opposite view of the folks who say, "Look on the pedestal. Look at the defining moments. Look at the catalytic events. Look at the big folks in history." It's pretty easy, I think, to miss the wisdom that lies behind this view.

So, learn from leaders. Use them as models. Use the great leaders to teach yourself, to teach people in organizations, to teach your kids. But, don't forget the quiet leaders, they matter too.

Thank you very much.