

Be the manager you want to be; even without the title.

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Bill Clinton, like many other leaders of note, is known to have set his eyes on the Presidency way before he was a public figure of reasonable repute; in effect he was a mere teenager so the legend goes. This is as common a story as you can get in the isles of leadership and management, but how relevant is this insight to those of us in the working environment? The devil's advocate may continue to argue that had Clinton never been President we may have never known of his ambitions to begin with. What is more evident is that in the course of achieving his life long objectives, Clinton had to evidence his capabilities. Before he was president he was president material.

Just the other day, I was exposed to a group of young aspiring students seeking work opportunities with a reputable international organization that undertakes a rigorous recruitment process. After a brief run through of what seemed to be a challenging career development opportunity, the viewing and attentively listening audience of mainly fresh graduates were eager to know what the criteria was to qualify. The presenter, an experienced human resource manager said quickly in response 'apart from your performance, which we deem to be a primary requirement, we are keen to see what evidenced management or leadership experience you have'. Then one student defensively retorted 'what if you didn't get such an opportunity?'

This is an adage predicament that has led to many squandering high potential opportunities because of failing to live out the dream in the current. When does a manager become a manager or when does a leader become a leader; when they have the title? Guess again. Is it sufficient to say

that you want to become a manager in twenty years time and then sit back and wait for twenty years to start behaving like a manager because you have not secured the title? Chances are high if you are employing the wait and see approach, you will end waiting and seeing everyone else become what you can only aspire to be! In the past, personnel management systems were primarily time and skill based, employing and developing on a first in first out basis. Today it is easy to find organizations employing people with alternative backgrounds and accelerating high potential employee's growth in a bid to retain and sustain the best. For example, business in many cases is not exclusively for business students alone; it is commonplace to see engineers becoming auditors.

How does this relate to anything of significance to you? In my last article, the path to self-realisation was presented as a journey often not taken, and this mentality is evidenced long before one walks into the long corridors of the corporate world. What we do does not necessarily evidence who we are. Does this confuse you even further? Some people are what they do; if you are a student then that is that and likewise if you are an entry level clerk that is it. The art of being you is in the being; being defines you, whereas doing just simply refines you. Gold is gold (at least in terms of its fundamental chemical configuration one lump of gold is just like any other); all we do is refine it to levels that suit our specific needs. Do you remember Robert Kelly's chart topping hit – *I believe I can fly*; he subtly interplays between 'if I can be it' and 'if I can do it'.

What happens if opportunities to shine do not actively present themselves in the environment in which you have been employed? Create them. Even threats, if properly managed, can be transformed into opportunities to evidence your management and leadership acumen. Innovation that is

dependent on creativity is a critical attribute in both management and leadership that has gained a lot of momentum in business circles across the world. Innovation is heavily dependent on people and their ability to see opportunities in places where they do not exist. Had Henry Ford, the legendary pioneer of motor vehicles, looked for opportunities that were evident, he would have invested in faster horses! It sometimes pays to work from nothing as everything then possible.

One wise scholar once said 'Be the change you want...' little did he know that years down the road this would be the most critical determinants of self realisation, even in the work place. Just as much as you may have a clear set mission of what you want to do in life, it is equally compelling to have a strategy laid out that enables you to evidence your abilities as you make your way there. If you want to get an opportunity in management and you do not have the experience, then at least engage the right attitude that communicates your management potential as opposed to buying time until when you get the title, because guess what, it may never happen! Take advantage of both conventional and non-conventional opportunities as they present themselves.