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By Robert J. Tamasy

AMBITION, EGOS AND LEADERSHIP

These days we seem to assume that ambition, inflated egos and leadership go together like a yolk, egg white and shell go together to comprise a fresh egg. Leaders want desperately to advance their organizations and themselves, so strong, even overbearing egos appear necessary if their ambitions are to be realized. In fact, their boards and stakeholders often encourage a “whatever it takes” mindset for governing their leadership tactics.

However, my friend Randy, a pastor, recently offered some thoughts that challenge such thinking. Why should business and professional people be concerned about what a clergyman says? Because, as he wrote, “We are like small business owners fighting to get the people’s attention through advertising. Part of attracting folks...is attracting them to ourselves. Our advertising, whether through constant participation in social media or hyping our stories, can easily blow up our egos, sense of competition, and conceit.”

One particular danger, Randy pointed out, is the temptation to give preference to those in a position to help us to maximize goals and ambitions. “When we are loved by powerful, important, influential, well-known, or wealthy people, it is quite easy to make them a priority and steal time from the poor, the isolated, the insignificant, and the overlooked.”

Without question, powerful, influential and affluent people – often customers or investors – are critical to the survival and growth of organizations. But if as followers of Jesus Christ one of our foremost goals is to serve Him and point others to Him, then we must remember what He said: “...[the Son of Man did not come to](#)

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be served, but to serve” (Matthew 20:28). In a similar way, one of the best ways for representing Jesus is to serve others, especially those that cannot reciprocate.

This may run counter to the philosophies and values of many in the marketplace, but the truths and principles presented by Jesus often ran counter to the cultures in which He and His followers lived as well. The apostle Paul, for example, wrote, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others as better than yourselves” (Philippians 2:3). In no way did he suggest there might be exceptions for those engaged in business or commerce.

To be honest, the employers and bosses that impressed me the most over the course of my working career were those who seemed to regard me as more important than themselves, who made special efforts at times to seek me out, ask how I was doing, and even assist me in my job if the need and opportunity presented itself. I can assure you, knowing they genuinely had concern for my well-being inspired me to work even harder in trying to fulfill and exceed their expectations.

As Paul wrote elsewhere, “Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited” (Romans 12:16). This works for people regardless of their status or the work setting, whether in the marketplace, education, politics, media, or vocational ministry.

© 2017. Robert J. Tamasy has written Business at Its Best: Timeless Wisdom from Proverbs for Today's Workplace; Tufting Legacies; coauthored with David A. Stoddard, The Heart of Mentoring, and edited numerous other books, including Advancing Through Adversity by Mike Landry. Bob's website is www.bobtamasy-readywriterink.com, and his biweekly blog is: www.bobtamasy.blogspot.com.

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Reflection/Discussion Question

1. Do you think force of ego can be a positive factor in a leader's effectiveness? Why or why not?

2. If we concede that we all have egos and self-interests, at what point can we recognize when ego and pursuit of goals and ambition have gone too far?

3. How can we consciously achieve a balance between worthy ambition and profits, while also ensuring that people of less importance and lower standing are not ignored or mistreated?

4. What in the life and example of Jesus Christ would inspire you to "in humility consider others better than yourselves"?

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:

Proverbs 11:2, 15:33, 16:18-19, 18:12, 21:24; 22:4, 29:23; Colossians 3:12

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