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The Leader's Leader—

Authority in Action continued

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713 words | 3 pages

I have been explaining the third core competency of the Leader's Leader: **authority**.

> ***True authority is the authority that makes other people authoritative; real power is the power that makes other people powerful.***

The role of the leader in this success strategy is as an **empowerer** who gives authority to those she leads.

Great leaders throughout history have understood the concept of delegated authority. One of the most important books published in the past five hundred years was Samuel Rutherford's masterful *Lex Rex* (*The Law is King*), written in 1644. For centuries, men and women had believed in the divine right of kings, that is, *rex lex*—*"the king is law."* In other words, the proclamations of a monarch were considered to carry the force of ultimate truth and law. Rutherford, quite literally, turned that concept on its head, and *Lex Rex* was one of the books that shaped the thinking of our Founding Fathers.

The Leader's Leader has a proper understanding of power; he understands that his power is *delegated* power—a trust, a stewardship. The leader's power is not *for* him; he holds it in trust to give away to others. The Leader's Leader is a custodian of power, not a despot. The leader is not the law; the *logos* is!

All managers in the organizational setting have a certain amount of **positional power** that is conferred through their job title. Staffers grant that authority (power) to the manager because he or she has the positional power to cause them to be fired, or at least to "grease the skids" to a considerable degree.

> ***I call this "positional power" because it is power that is granted by the organizational structure; it is not earned through the example of the leader's character.***

We have all seen men and women who abuse their positional power, employing fear and intimidation to coerce a staff to perform. This kind of "motivation" inevitably produces malicious obedience. The human spirit will *never* flourish and excel, because one is naturally cautious, closed, and defensive. A high-command, high-control leadership style consistently sucks the life and laughter out of a building. Worse yet, from a purely practical standpoint, it drains profits! "*Delegation* and *empowerment* are not just buzzwords," Hamel and Prahalad assert, "they are desperately needed antidotes to the elitism that robs so many companies of so much brain power."[1]

Think about it for a moment; what is the response of most people to someone who attempts to make them fearful? They are likely to become **resistant;** resistance soon sours into **resentment**; in some extreme cases resentment will be expressed by **revenge**. I have spent more than thirty-five years working with individuals and organizations. You might be surprised to know how many angry staffers I have interviewed who confided, "He thinks he's going to get away with treating me like dirt? I've gotten even, and he doesn't even know it!" One man estimated that he had cost his employer thousands of dollars over the years, simply by

[1] Hamel and Prahalad, p. 144.

letting mistakes go by that he *could* have corrected... but his intentional negligence was payback to a manager who had bullied and belittled him.

Jack Lannom is an internationally known speaker, author, and consultant. He has served as a corporate coach for several Fortune 500 companies, including Citibank, R&R Donnelly and Sons, Jefferson Pilot Communications, Caterpillar, and also Knight-Ridder Newspapers and is featured on the PBS television program, "Lannom Memory Methods".

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To learn more about Jack Lannom, visit his website here: JackLannom.com where you can sign up for his free newsletter, learn more about his products and read the next 25 pages of *People First*.