

## Flexibility—# 8 of Eight Keys

Flexibility is the willingness to change what we are doing to achieve the outcomes desired.

Flexibility allows us to consider variables, sometimes opposing arguments, and then choose the best option to accomplish the desired outcome. Leaders must make decisions and act on them and there is more and more pressure today to do it quickly. Many times decisions are made because that is the way it was done before; so I don't have to think about it now. Therefore, mistakes are made in decision making because of the speed of doing business. Being flexible is managed by being open, allowing yourself flex time to gather information, consolidate and make decisions based on the best possible solution for long term gain.

Most good leadership courses will include some discussion regarding “bounded rationality.” This happens when leaders make decisions with a bounded or limited amount of information. There are times when we should all slow down so that at the end of the day we have done the right things. In the book, “In Praise of Slow,” Karl Honoré talks about deliberately slowing things down, especially decision-making, so that we can fully appreciate what is going on around us. Doing things “Once Right The First Time”, an article published by Peer Mentor.net, is actually more efficient than moving forward too quickly with bounded rationality.

A good contemporary example would be that of the Ontario Provincial Government approving a law that allowed for “Sharia Law” and laws from other countries and groups to effectively replace the Family Law Act of Ontario. Article 32 of the Business Arbitration Act slipped through government quietly because few people understood what it really meant. At the time, the politicians argued that we are a multi-cultural nation and we need to respect the religious variations of all cultures within Canadian culture—our cultural mosaic. At the outset it sounded logical. What they didn't understand at the time is that it would supercede Canadian law within the subcultures. For example, within some Jewish communities, a



woman would have to apply to the local Rabbi to separate or divorce her husband even if he was abusing her emotionally or physically. She couldn't just leave the marriage. This would also be true of some Muslim families in their sub-communities. This was totally wrong because the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is a well written document to protect all Canadians. When you become a Canadian, you are protected under Canadian law. Sharia law undermines that Charter. So a man named Robert Simpson and Homa Arjimonid took this on and mustered enough Canadian support to have the politicians revisit this law and change it back to the way it was. To read and hear about this and other Fore Runners, go to <http://wisdom-radio.com/blog/>. The Government officials were operating with "bounded rationality." They moved too quickly, were missing key information and could not see the larger picture for Canadian citizens.

In business, we are often making decisions just like this and we pay for it later. The key is to be flexible, plan for tight timelines to make sure that we have the necessary information to make the best possible decisions. It is important to not go down the road like an old milk horse with blinders on. Yes, you want to stay focussed on company goals. Yes, you want to have vision upon which to make all decisions. However, you must also keep a level of flexibility to change your mind as you go. You need to be open to new information even though there is great pressure to meet your target goals on time.

The mayor of New York, Rudolf Giuliani, in his book on "Leadership," was expecting and planned for an attack on the city. He admitted that he expected it to be either a harbor attack or an attack on the water system. They truly didn't expect an air attack with passenger planes. Every Monday morning, Giuliani would meet with the leaders of the city. They made plans on how they would handle an attack on the city of New York. In their planning, they planned to be flexible. They knew that communication would be essential so they pre-arranged a meeting place for the major leaders of the city (Fire Chief, Police Chief, Planning Department, City Works, etc.) The really interesting part is that they made contingency plans for other locations. They planned three different places to meet in a



specific order. When the Towers were attacked, they actually had to look at the second and third options, finally deciding on the third. The fallout of smoke and dust made the first two locations inoperable because the cinder and ash blocked the communication system. This was not predictable; however, alternative locations were in place. The key here is that you can “plan to be flexible.” Map out contingency plans.

Establish a clear vision of what your business is about, set down clear goals and how you will manage these goals to move forward. For example, CN had a difficult time at first seeing that they weren't “just in the train business,” that in fact, they were in the “transportation business.” They could have been much larger and in less trouble if they had seen this clearly at the outset. Know your business and then plan to be flexible as you take on new information. Be ready for a truly flexible marketplace. Plan for growth and the inevitable change.

Deepak Chopra spoke at Massey Hall in Toronto, April 27th, 2009, and he said, “There will be a new economy; but, the old one has to die first. The old economy was fueled by greed and hubris, and could not survive. We spent money we did not have on things we did not need to impress people who did not matter.” Bailout plans revive that old economy and that's a mistake. We now need to be reflective, choose a different approach to business, be more aware of the total impact of business with a more holistic and healthy approach to regain longevity. We would be better to focus our spending and production on things that society needs. Deciding what that begins with some personal reflection on what matters most to us, and dropping whatever we don't need or whatever we buy simply to impress or keep up with others.

Change in this new economy is happening right now. It looks and feels like an economic crash. However, there is great opportunity to buy low and then sell high as the economy turns around. We need to look at business with open eyes and not narrow that vision too much on the obvious goals so that we miss the great opportunities in front of us.

This is the “Flexibility Key” the last of “Eight Keys For Success In Life.”



## Summary of the Eight Keys For Success In Life

In summary, the “Eight Keys For Success In Life” provide an excellent framework for Mentor, Coach and Leadership Training. These keys are so powerful in helping develop strong foundations for a more effective leadership and lifestyle.

“We have to change within in order to change the world outside,” says Deepak Chopra. “The world mirrors what is in us.” It is profound whether you have integrity or not. People can see it and feel it from you. So realize your personal goals as they match company goals. Remain true to your “self.” Own this position. Be present in the moment and focus on your goals. Then you will “speak with good purpose” because your words match your internal vision. Keep your personal life and business life in balance and always keep doors open for the change that will happen whether you want it or not. If you are flexible, then you are ready for the necessary changes that will sustain your competitive edge in this fast moving market place. Flexibility allows you to be fluid and competitive; yet, cooperate with a moral position that is defensible in the long run.

Keep well!

