

*The*

# CORNERSTONE

• CHARACTER FIRST! TRAINING AND TEAM DEVELOPMENT •

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## Character: the First and Last Frontier of Leadership Theory

Emotional intelligence, 360-degree leadership, change management, strategic agility, leadership perspectives, culture of trust, managing chaos, discovering leadership strengths, leadership by breaking the rules, encouraging employees' hearts, and customer centricity. This is a list of popular leadership theories currently found in bookstores. Leadership theories are like McDonald's restaurants -- they are everywhere. How do managers and administrators make any sense of these theories while gleaning from them

those nuggets of information that can help in carrying out their responsibilities? Is there any fundamental truth that forms a common strand running among all of these and other yet "undiscovered" theories? The answer is simply "yes."

### Leadership is Relationship

The basis of all leadership is rooted in relationships. Relationship based on a person to person or a person to a team. Right now, your internal alarm is probably going off. You may suspect the remainder of what you will read in this article contains information you already know. Relationship as a concept appears to be simple when compared to the "scientific" leadership theories mentioned at the start of this article. We see "relationship" as such a common figure of speech that we immediately dismiss it as the basis for any serious leadership discussion. We may view "relationship" as a tool we primarily use in our personal life, but not in our professional life. We know fundamentally that we use relationship in leading people, but to declare relationship as the basis of all leadership seems to be a bit over the top. Or is it?

### Character-Based Leadership

Any serious discussion of the relationship between a leader and those being led will eventually center on the character of those involved in the relationship. Why is that? It is because the character of each participant will determine how he or she will react to each situation throughout the day. Qualities are continually being molded in our lives that determine how we will respond to circumstance, good or bad. Therefore, our character traits are great predictors of future actions in both stressful and non-stressful circumstances. If the preceding comments are true, then character recognition and development is one of the great frontiers left in leadership, deserving to be explored and studied by serious leaders.

### Developing Character

How is character recognized and developed? Some believe that our parents give character to us during our formative years, or at birth. Actually, character is developed moment by moment as the character qualities built into our lives determine our response to circumstance. Our character can

be developed either stronger or weaker, depending on these qualities and responses. A change in response requires a change in thought. We know that with diligent study, thoughts can be developed in a given direction. If we stay the course and repeat these thoughts enough times, a habit is formed. Character development is the result of the study of character qualities and the application of different response thoughts, which repeated enough times, form a habit. This is not a theory; this is reality.

### **Hire for Character; Train for Skills**

Character is a powerful force in the world. This is evident by the stories we read every day in the newspaper. Poor character can destroy a person, team or institution quicker than any other factor. Major character failures are reported monthly in the public and private sectors. This trend will continue until a decision is made to begin to hire, recognize and develop character within those we lead. Character development is not a program that you implement, tire of, and dispose of

in favor of the newest leadership theory or technique. Rather, the use of character-based leadership and team development, starting with hiring for character, becomes the basis of all leadership initiatives implemented within an organization, regardless of organization size or complexity.

Citygate Associates has used the *Character First!* initiative as a basis for improving customer service and teamwork for the past ten years. Results have been nothing less than astounding. If you and your organization are serious about developing leadership in a dynamic, lasting way, contact Citygate. We will train your organization to recognize and develop the 49 character qualities within your team and set the stage for lasting success.

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If you would like to discuss *Character First!* and how it can be integrated into your operation, please contact Rick by phone at (916) 458-5103. You may also contact him via email at [rcarr@citygateassociates.com](mailto:rcarr@citygateassociates.com).



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- Performance Audits
- Process Improvements
- Management Studies
- Strategic Planning
- Organizational Development
- Community Development
- Animal Care and Control
- Budget and Financial Analysis
- Character Training
- Employee Training

Citygate's clients benefit due to their ability to provide more effective and cost-efficient services through improved management approaches and systems, clarified focus, and upgraded skills.

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