



## The Personal Coach BULLETIN

balance through partnership

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COACHING POINT

### CANADA IS A COUNTRY OF MEDIOCRITY

Having been closely watching the American presidential race with a great deal of interest, and have to say being fascinated even enthralled by a number of the speeches, I recalled having read an article in the newspaper last year quoting a study or report that concluded Canada was a "country of mediocrity." It stated that we are not particularly innovative, creative or willing to step up and take risks to move our society forward and become more of a leader in the world.

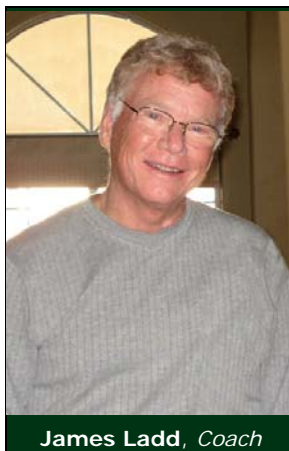
I am not in a position to comment on the parameters and validity of the study or the qualifications of its authors but rather would like to comment on what I see as the underlying theme. What they are really talking about is "LEADERSHIP" or what they perceive as a lack of it in our country!

Well, let's get this out of the way first, I believe that leadership in our country is really the responsibility of all Canadians, not just a select few who happen to hold lofty positions in business or government. More on that later.

Many definitions exist for leadership and depending upon which one you subscribe too, there may be some element of truth to the above quoted study. It may even be more accurate than some might imagine. Many for example would have you believe that a leader is one who is in a position or has been granted power and authority in relation to others; such as a company president or general manager, chairman of the board or even a supervisor on an assembly line, who by the nature of their positional definition, believe they can hold people accountable for their performance and/or behaviour. Nothing really unusual here or in theory dysfunctional in and of itself but many who do in fact hold these positions are of the belief that if they can control people and get them to submit to their will, this is accountability and leadership. If you look around you in society you see no shortage of examples that clearly illustrate this. I would wager most of you have been a victim of this type of control or so called leadership, and some of you I would bet are in fact a perpetrator of it.

This of course is not leadership but rather behaviour symptomatic of what sometimes turns out to be an individual's inability to trust, because of a low level of self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy, often well hidden unless you know what to look for! They find themselves in a constant struggle to maintain control and order in their lives, because without it they would be consumed by their own self-doubt, insecurities and anxiety.

Unfortunately, there will always be a number of presidents, managers, chairmen and supervisors of this type and you can expect only mediocrity from these self styled leaders. For them it is not about something outside of themselves or in a much broader sense the greater good, but rather their own self interest.



James Ladd, Coach

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If this is your experience and/or the way you see leadership, than we do have a case for the contention that we are a nation of mediocrity. But wait, there is hope!

**"True leadership is something very different."**

Leadership is about vision, having a dream, a future state seen and the courage, discipline, passion, mental toughness and energy to work tirelessly to reach for that future with ideally the collaboration and support of likeminded individuals who come together as a team to realize a shared vision and common goal.



Naturally, there is a requirement for the strategic organization and distribution of tasks to achieve that future but that does not include attempting to control people but rather only things or processes! When a true leader works to create just the right climate for his/her team; a supportive climate based upon an understanding of the different communication styles and skill sets of team

members, the recognition of shared values and like needs, all consistent with the overall goal of the team or project, then team members become internally motivated to get it done, becoming inspired to hold the same belief in the dream as the leader. It is the ongoing job of the leader to communicate that vision to their team, continually validate them, set an example through his/her behaviour, and then as much as possible get out of the way and let the team do its work.



What is absolutely essential to realize is that our countries leadership in the world doesn't begin or end at the top but rather is the "responsibility of all Canadians" and has its origins at the grass roots level in our schools, universities, communities and at all levels in our business organizations. As we have all heard before and it is worth saying again; "leaders are not born, leaders are made."

No, we are not and will never be a country of mediocrity as long as we are able to continually identify and develop enough fine young men and woman who have the personal characteristics that can be trained and moulded into strong, strategic leadership.

The leaders seen on the right were not born they were made, and their greatness realized, oftentimes came with a huge price attached to it. They could have all told you stories of the sacrifices they had to make and the courage that was required in their development and when those around them initially could not or would not embrace their vision of a new and unique future. They all endured and we all know what eventually happened as a result. The world is a much better place because of them.

With a Canadian Federal election fast approaching, and the American presidential race well underway, are we witnessing true leadership in action, both left and right of center? One way or another, it is compelling and invigorating to watch and listen too.

~James Ladd

