

*December 1997*

## Kings bearing mission statements – Christmas column

Balthasar checked the astrologers' notes and looked through his telescope. There was no mistaking the sign; a publisher's contract if ever he'd seen one. His work was complete. He suspected he could improve on the title, Exemplary Leadership, but there would be plenty of time on the way.

Melchior was saddling his camel. He felt more confident about the heading for his own book, *The Soul of Management*, blending empathy with social responsibility. Caspar, meanwhile, was struggling for inspiration. Concepts of Empowerment for the First Millennium was a bit of a mouthful.

The three gurus made their way to Jerusalem following not one star, but the seven stars of superior performance - status, sacrifice, synergy, selflessness, self-confidence, self-discipline and self-awareness laid down by Balthasar in his best-selling work, *In Search of Alliteration*. "Hyphens are cheating," said Caspar. "That way you could get 20 or 30 really good qualities without trying. Anybody could do that."

"That's my next book, *In Search of Self-management*," said Balthasar. "It outlines the 30 characteristics of self."

"Too many," said Caspar who preferred to use boxes, curly arrows and inverted pyramids in his work while Melchior was wedded to his *Mastering Messiah Matrix* and the strategy trees he described in *The Empty Tunic*.

Their consultation with Herod did not go well. He declined a suggestion of a 360 degree appraisal. As a non-executive appointment from Rome, he was concerned that his position might be vulnerable to institutional pressures.

He was, however, attracted to their description of re-engineering and ordered an immediate, if drastic, downsizing programme involving all males under the age of two. "It's a form of succession planning," he cried as he watched the sages depart in the direction of Bethlehem. And so it came to pass that the three wise men arrived at the manger and beheld the newborn baby.

"What he needs is a mission statement that outlines a sense of vision," said Balthasar who held that strategic vision, shared values and a focus on creative culture were the three essentials of organisational leadership. "He also needs a decent office," he said, looking around at the hay-strewn stalls with donkey, sheep and lowing cattle.

Melchior disagreed. "This is the virtual Messiah. He doesn't need offices, company camels or grand titles. His organisational structure will demand that you take up your bed and walk to the next assignment. I call it hot stabling."

The three men consulted on the mission and tossed around a few ideas such as: to create a new religion or to do great deeds but they settled on: to be the best. "We can develop it later," said Melchior. "The most important thing about the mission statement is the process you go through in arriving at a suitable form of words. The idea is to distill your aims and values, allowing you to focus on a growth strategy built

around a clear goal."

"We shall also need a competency framework if we are to establish training and development inputs supported by internal mentoring and coaching."

"Shouldn't we leave that to the parents?" asked Caspar.

"Ordinarily," said Balthasar, "But this boy will be on a fast track, moving through a series of projects. He's going to need early international experience - Egypt should do. Is the flight booked? And there will need to be some form of benchmarking."

The gurus trawled their databases for the best people in their respective fields. They listed Moses, Elijah, David and John the Baptist against a table of hard and soft measures of achievement - miracles, parables, raising the dead, feet washing, transfiguration.

"What about generalship?" said Balthasar.

The gurus pondered the question. Generalship could be a problem, considering the successes of Alexander the Great, Hannibal and Julius Caesar. "Don't forget Sun Tzu," said Caspar. "I've done a book about him."

"We all have," said Melchior.

"The question is, just what kind of leader are we looking for - the old style command and control type or someone who has more of an enabling approach?" said Balthasar. "We must concentrate on core competencies. This man is going to need good inter-personal skills if he's going to get people to buy into a global change programme."

"Have you thought about a shepherd?" said a voice from the back of the manager. The Three Wise Men could just make out a figure in the light of the glory that was shining all around. It was a shepherd. "We were out watching our flocks by night when an angel of the Lord came down and told us not to be afraid but to come over here where we would meet the new Messiah. It seems to me that a shepherd would make a fitting role model," he said.

"He has a point," said Melchior, mentally constructing a new chapter in his book he would call "shepherding your employees towards outstanding shareholder value". He liked the flock metaphor.

"The problem with the shepherd," said Balthasar, "Is that it would mean the end of smiting down." They shuffled uneasily. Smiting down had been an effective way of achieving an immediate improvement on the bottom line.

"I always thought that smiting was a short-termist solution. It's time we ended begatting and the rest of the Old Testament jargon. The emerging language of people management could draw on farming terminology. The new leaders will be shepherds and fishers of men," said Melchior.

"So the defining source of competitive advantage for the Messiah will be the way he treats his people. Communications and people skills are essential. He has to be able to deliver a sermon to 5,000 if necessary.

"This man can cut through the hierarchical structure if he builds himself a great team. He will have the ability to re-invent himself. He's not going to need IIP (Investors in Pharisees) status. But he will need a workable recruitment policy, supported possibly by a battery of tests and action learning. I think it more important he goes for the right kind of fit - fishermen, shepherds farming types, practical people."

"Like us," said Caspar.

He did not notice the uncontrolled burst of mirth from the shepherds. "We haven't yet discussed reward strategy," he said. "I think it should be based on defined performance measures. But how do we judge? Numbers of converts, good deeds, miracles, lives saved? What about bonus and should we put in place a long-term incentive scheme to align his aims more closely with those of his stakeholders."

"I don't think that will be necessary," said the shepherd. "But he could use your gold, frankincense and myrrh." And so it was that the gurus left their gifts and outlined a modest out- placement package to deal with the Herod restructuring. The case study was related later in what would become the bestselling management guide in history. But they didn't write it.

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