

Leadership in politics

So, now Iowa AND New Hampshire are history. Interesting results indeed! But how do they relate to inspirational leadership and building a high performance team? Well, when first talking about the results of Iowa, I mentioned that Obama had done a nice job of being positive and painting the vision, but not a GREAT job. The vision was full of hope and the wonderful rhetoric that is such an added bonus to the true inspirational leader. However, ultimately, the vision was not painted with enough specificity. That, by the way, does not mean the policies and plans of Obama's potential new administration were not laid out chapter and verse and backed up by numbers, statistics, examples and rock hard certainty. No, it means that the STORY of the future has not been told yet by Obama with enough meat so that we can all see ourselves as participants in it. If Obama can tell the story of where we WILL all be at a designated time in the future IF we commit to a current path, then he will have fulfilled the heart of the eight secrets of inspirational leadership, which is Secret Number Four "Enoble the Effort". In other words, if Obama could say something such as:

"I see an America where all of our people are united against the power of prejudice.

I see an America where our borders are windows of opportunity, not walls of fear and insecurity.

I see an America where every child can live in health and not despair of help in times of illness

I see an America where the world looks to us for strength and does not cower in hatred of our arms.

It is this America, a land of true freedom and unbending opportunity, that this generation of Americans can and WILL create. It is this America, a land where education is seen not as an accomplishment to be derided, but a noble goal worthy of our best efforts, where our citizens do not revel in bread and circuses but rather stand tall in the uniqueness of our individuality to be what we were meant to be, what we were born to be, representatives of a city on a hill, a light to the world, the hope of what we all truly desire, the best of ourselves."

And then ELABORATE on that story in his subsequent speeches, he will begin to fill in the picture of what that America will be like and how we, as Americans, can play our part in the great drama of the 21st century. If he can do that, or if anyone can do that, they can reach to our hearts and move us towards a better, more purposeful, more noble future.

In New Hampshire, Hillary Clinton finally did what I noted she needed to do in order to resuscitate her candidacy. She CONNECTED to the audience. As I mentioned, she needed to somehow make the emotional link that every successful candidate in this particular election NEEDS to do with the electorate. Her little teary eyed moment (and I think it was very real), in a single heartbeat, made that connection. People could finally say, "wait a minute. Not only is Hillary sharp, experienced, determined, and hard working, she is also REAL. She is just like me, ONLY BETTER." That is so important to all of us. What we hope to have as our leaders are people who in fact ARE better than we are. We hope to have people who represent the best that we can be. We don't want people who are not as good as we are or who don't represent the best of us. On the other hand, those people have to have the qualities that we all value more than anything; our humanness. Our sense of compassion and empathy that reminds us we are all precious members of the human race and, in the end, that is what we must have from our leaders. Why? Because we want to know that when it comes down to it, those who lead us are not only aware of our best interests, they are truly looking out for US, not just US collectively, but US as individuals. The emotional connectivity that Hillary showed (and that she needs to keep showing) answers the question that everyone has been asking "how much does she REALLY care?" Hillary's moment was all about secret #2; Everyone wants to feel valued. We all want to feel valued by our leaders. We don't want to be another statistic. It is very hard to express value to large masses of people, but sometimes, a little tear here and there goes a long way.

On the Republican side, Mike Huckabee continues to make that emotional connection, though his policies and belief system seems to be at odds with the conservative base. He has a wonderful sense of humor and a folksy way that is more articulate and 'real' than Fred Thomsons' down home manner that just doesn't quite match up to Ronald Reagan's quiet certainty. John McCain has shown resilient determination and the ability to connect one on one. As I mentioned earlier, however, he has not been able to paint the future for the country with the warmth and connectivity he can show to a smaller audience. It will be interesting to see what happens as we go forward into South Carolina and Michigan and all of the other states that will be contested between now and February 5th.

What we are seeing now is inspirational leadership and teambuilding on a national scale being played out right in front of us every day. We should all take note. Leading any team requires the same skills that these candidates are either showing they have or proving they lack. The Eight Secrets are as good a guide as any and better than most for pointing the way. I wanted to talk a little bit about secret three, setting the high performance objective in light of the campaign, but I will address that next time!