

# **Leadership Dilemma: The American Leadership Paradox**

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As coaches, we aim to support the development of our clients to meet strategic goals and to enhance overall quality of life. Coaching and Leadership intersect – In the organizational sense; Associates want value from their leaders, and desire to develop a co-relationship focused on achieving success. The current zeitgeist of Leadership is trending towards acquiring specific skills that is possessed by the coaching industry. As potential change agents, coaches must ask powerful questions about the psychological dynamics of our society at large.

- Are we at war with ourselves?*
- Why are large bureaucratic organizations slow to act?*
- How do we understand the complexities of the struggle?*

Society demands a powerful altruistic Leader that makes quick decisions that benefit everyone while simultaneously providing security. However, America is a nation of individualists who strive to be the Leader, and are ashamed to be categorized in the role of follower. Simply, American culture frowns upon the follower and the omnipotent Leader is exaggeratedly admired.

- Who do you want to be?*

The Leader of course! Well, the problem is that Leaders need followers. If everyone is the Leader and no-one follows, then there is a Leadership dilemma called The American Leadership Paradox.

1. Society wants community and togetherness, but explicitly yearns for a capitalist society with individualist freedom
2. Society values family, but relishes in the rebel persona
3. American culture is a paradox that attempts to indulge within both ends of the spectrum

Leaders are unable to lead because society chooses to scoff at instead of follow. Cognitive dissonance is displayed towards Leaders, and society at large believes they are capable of producing better results. Trust and integrity have been squandered by previous leaders which disables pre-determined respect for future Leaders.

The Nature/Nurture debate – Is it inborn or due to the situation? Current research has determined the debate to be estimated at a 50/50 split.

If there are wonderful Leaders and the situation is not conducive to leading, then the cold-hard truth is – Leaders will fail 50% of the time regardless of inborn or learned ability. Current Leadership is failing at an astounding rate (over 70%). What constitutes leadership failure? Short answer: Not meeting goals.

- How do we survive in a Leaderless society if our models in family, business, politics, education, and more, require a Leader who has power that is admired and followed?*

- Can we all be leaders without followers or is there another solution?*

Currently, the common consensus is that: our Leaders are unethical, self-centered, and ruining our economy! Americans, don't trust the government, don't trust commercials, and in fact, place little faith on anything. Why? Is it because Americans are horrible people, or is it because our system is coming to a breaking point? I argue for the latter.

- Why do we tolerate unethical leadership?*

- Why do some leaders act unethically?*

Our individualist system funneled these leaders to the pinnacle because they are the best players of the game our society has produced. They are tolerated because, if they are great Leaders, elitist, and are flawed, then the individual perception interprets an ego-boost which sends the individual's self-esteem sky rocketing. The ego-imagination covets the positive regard of a Leader, and an unethical Leader with praise is lesser qualified for the role of Leader than the self. The American Leadership Paradox!

- How do we fix the Paradox?*

Fixing or modifying any paradox is a mission within a mission, which might never be accomplished, and is why venturing out on this journey is more than challenging. Albeit while complex, well worth the strategic effort because Leadership is an integral part of a successful society.

### **Professional Leadership Coaching**

Enhancing self-awareness of cultural factors and aiding in understanding the application of value-based Leadership. Utilizing expert coaching tools to raise awareness and move Leaders through blinding dimensions. As coaches, we could participate in curbing and overcoming the deterioration of the aforementioned: American Leadership. We cannot be concerned with the system and concentration of choosing Leaders, but rather, concentrate on the coaching role in development which is integral to Leadership success. This article challenges all qualified coaches to understand the dynamics of Leadership and contribute to supporting the evolution & success of the Leadership dimension.