

I recently browsed through the business section of my local bookstore (yes, we still have one!) searching for books on stewardship as a business leadership principle—and found only one (Stewardship by Peter Block). I continued to search online and was surprised at the scarcity of materials available on the subject. There are a variety of books on stewardship from a spiritual perspective and a few related to wealth management; but what does the scarcity of books related business stewardship say about our current concepts of leadership?

According to the Online Etymology Dictionary the word steward traces its origins back to the Old English word “stigward,” meaning “house guardian.” By the late 14th century, a steward was “one who manages affairs of an estate on behalf of his employer.” The current Merriam Webster Dictionary defines stewardship as “the conducting, supervising, or managing of something; especially the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one’s care.”



In his book titled “Stewardship: Choosing Service over Self-Interest,” Peter Block defines the word as “the choice to preside over the orderly distribution of power... it is the willingness to be accountable for the well-being of the larger organization by operating in service, rather than control, of those around us.”

From a business leadership perspective, I’ve come to define a steward as someone who is a trustee of the organizational mission and a shepherd of its resources—the most valuable being its human capital.

Last year I introduced a new concept in team dynamics called “The TribeVibes™.” Based on two decades of developing target marketing initiatives, which always revolved around recruiting and retaining the appropriately skilled staff, I’ve concluded that the most effective teams are usually composed of three distinct TribeVibes defined as...

The Seer: a logical, process-oriented individual

The Healer: a nurturing, creative individual

The Warrior: a manifesting, results-oriented individual

The leadership role in the TribeVibes paradigm is occupied by a fourth person who hails from one of the TribeVibes mentioned above and is defined as...

The Steward: a mission driven and collaborate individual who is willing to delegate their leadership role to other team members based on the strategic goals at hand

Since the codification of the Four Temperaments by the Greek physician Hippocrates in the 4th century BC, there have been over a 100 personality profiling systems that usually have their roots in four basic personality quadrants. The TribeVibes Talent/Team Engagement System differs from most of these instruments in that its foundation is three root personality profiles with the added interchangeable leadership role of the Steward.

Times they are a changing... the command and control model of leadership was developed during the industrial age based on the assumption that standardization of processes would contain costs and maximize efficiencies—these assumptions also relied on supply and demand elements remaining constant and predictable. Today's shifting global business dynamics and expanding niche market segmentations are all put stable and have outpaced the static governance model that many organizations have built their past successes upon.

The bottom line is that one individual rarely is going to have the emotional and intellectual bandwidth to lead an organization through the ever-evolving business landscape which we face today—what is required is a shared governance model that engaging and leverages capable teams to steward the mission and shift strategies based on the changing economic and technological environments.

TribeVibes presents a new approach that encourages all of us to step up to the role of Steward—and hopefully write some more books on the subject!

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