A MODEL FOR THE 21ST CENTURY LEADER

The 21st century leader model will define a leader as someone who has an acumen for human relationship as well as business. The idea of the human factor playing a pivotal role in the makeup of the 21st century leader is based on the definition of leadership—the process of influencing an organized group toward accomplishing a goal (Roach & Behting, 1984).

The effectiveness of one's influence can be traced to the human factor-proficiency in the human side of business displayed by consideration for the organization's stakeholders, as well as society as a whole. Leadership and the human factor are packaged and presented to one's public through professionalism, the third element in the 21st century leader model.

In the 70's and 80's, before the onslaught of global competition, fueled by gigantic leaps in technological know-how, an executive could keep his company afloat and even ahead simply through power-clout to make decisions with the stroke of a pen. But the competitively charged 90's, filled with corporate downsizing and globalization, has been a harbinger for the reality of doing business in the 21st century. In addition, employees today are intraprenuerial in spirit and skill set. The technological skills acquired by 21st century workers are transferable throughout companies, industries and even countries—a mobile skill set. This type of employee tends to respond better to influence than power.

To be competitive in the 21st century, an executive will need influence—a vision that inspires people to shed their doubts and follow his lead, an ability to connect with people and shape the way they look at their work, workplace and world (Lacayo, 1996). Without influence, an executive's power dies out at the end of its own channels of command. Executives will need to gain assent, not just obedience, to have imitators not just subordinators. The 21st century leader cannot be satisfied by getting people to do things his way. He needs them to see things his way too—the art of influence.

A leader's influence is directly tied to the human factor—the ability to understand and deal sensitively with the human elements of an organization. In reality, that's all an organization is—a network of people—employees and their families, customers, shareholders, suppliers and the communities in which the company does business. The success or failure of these groups determines the success or failure of the organization. Without genuine concern for the human side of business, it will be extremely difficult for the 21st century executive to sustain and grow an organization.

The 21st century leader must master the synergistic power of leadership, professionalism and the human factor. Through this triad, the leader can build an organizational culture whose goals include **positive leadership**—making a contribution to/for human dignity (White, 1995). This goal should be the ultimate aim for the corporate players in the 21st century global marketplace.