



October 23rd^h, 2009

Dear Friends

I attended 'Speech night/Prize giving' at my old school last night. The experience brings back memories of the years in which my teachers found no merit in this beast, and the point at which after much difficulty they found some!

On reflection, the difference was made when one teacher gave me the opportunity to be helpful.

I recall that one of the cardinal sins of school life was pomposity! Anyone with an arrogant edge soon had their bubble burst for them on the grounds that the exercise of voluntary humility is actually quite hard to effect. Yet, humility has been identified as the outstanding characteristic of Servant or 'Level 5' leaders, in great organisations. It comes not by the absence of pomp, or the practice of grovelling, or even embracing the menial, nor is it achieved by hyper-effort

How is it then legitimately achieved?

Edgar H Schein in his book "Helping" fills in for me what were a few blind spots.

Helping has always been a childhood virtue, something every mother teaches their children to be, even if it comes in the form 'the best way you can help, is to keep out of the way'. I even earned the 'Helping Hand' badge in Pathfinders. It never occurred, in my naivety, that the offering and receiving of help creates a delicate power gradient. Not all help is offered/received for the right reason and in the right way. Neither is it always welcomed or used constructively.

Schein concludes in summary with seven helpful principles:

1. Givers and receivers of help, must be ready for partnership
2. The conditions under which help transpires must be equitable
3. Help must come in the right form. There are times when being an expert or a prescribing doctor is appropriate, but most of the time, being a process consultant works better
4. Help starts with pure and humble inquiry. No fake questions! The helper really does need to understand the problem behind the problem.
5. In the helping relationship every action and inaction has a consequence. Nothing is neutral.
6. Helpers do not hijack ownership of the problem.
7. Nobody has all the answers. Help merely transitions.

It seems to me that **humble leaders have mastered the knack of receiving and offering help.**

Thank you for the helpful contribution that you make to the lives of those you serve. May '*God help you speak the helping word, and sweeten it with singing, and drop it in some lonely vale, to set those echoes ringing*'.

All the best