MORAL INTELLIGENCE

Central to this discussion, Moral Intelligence is how we think about, talk about and apply values of our work in public and private institutions without getting caught up in the politics of virtue or the parochialism of doctrine. As such, moral intelligence comprises at least two areas of focus for our discussion of leadership intelligence. One is personal ethics - consisting of an individual behavior and private virtues that build character. The second is social ethics - a combination of public values that build community and promote social cohesion. As we read the newspapers and experience the lack of moral compasses in the business community, we can begin to comprehend how important this discussion is to leadership intelligence.

The central process involved in the development of one’s personal moral development is one of conflict and choice. As children we move through stages of moral development when we are caught between our ‘natural’ wants and needs and the necessity of obeying rules in order to avoid punishment, or to gain incentives such as a return of favors, a tangible award or approval of others. These choices are worked out not simply by reasoning but by day-to-day exposure to concrete choices that reflect moral conflicts. Dominating and personifying these alternatives are leaders such as parents, teachers, peers, priests, preachers, village elders. The sharper the conflict, the larger the role of leaders and culture will tend to be in moral development.

As we progress into adulthood our perspectives of ourselves increasingly take the view of role models - those individuals with stronger and clearer motivation and purpose have greater influence. This process of moral development is not simple, it is fraught with ups and downs, and it is also not predetermined. Leaders and followers constantly come up against intense, high pressured situational ethics of particular groups and distinct circumstances. Typical personal values, such as honesty, responsibility, courage and simple fairness, take on increasingly the qualities of more broadly and social morality or ethic.

Moral Intelligence as social ethics suggests that there are core ethical values, social responsibilities, economic and ecological stewardship that are congruent practices and responsibilities of leadership in any community/organizational environment. This is in direct conflict with the values and behaviors that have been condoned through our personal development - manifesting in action for achievement, action for success, failure is not an option, etc. As a society, we are now condemning these behaviors in favor of socially defined ethics, accountability and responsibility.

The assumption that morality is merely a private, personal or religious matter and that moral choices are merely subjective and relative is one of the most common roadblocks to the discussion as it applies to Leadership Intelligence in general. Yes it demands extensive, sophisticated social and practical intelligence. Core Ethical Values are in fact fundamental, shared values. They make social life possible and indeed enjoyable. Intelligent ethical and social problem solving is becoming a key to leadership intelligence in the 21st century. For further information and discussion regarding Moral Intelligence in business and leadership development contact GRANT Partners at (303) 623-4433.