

Unfortunately in the present culture mediocre leadership is often accepted as excellent and what is an ordinary vision is believed to be extraordinarily sufficient to carry an organization (or a family) through these difficult times. Every so often as the dynamics of leadership change there is a paradigm that revolutionizes how people lead and are led. One such change that occurred over 20 years ago was the advent of Six Sigma, a data driven management tool that eliminated waste in processes whether they were manufacturing or service oriented in origin. Six Sigma has become synonymous with providing quality of service or manufacturing in an efficient and cost effective manner. The concept or some variation of it is used by the U.S. military and by 82 of the Fortune 100 companies. It has been recognized as one of the ten best management tools ever and is estimated to have saved companies well over a hundred billion dollars in the past 20 years. As companies implemented Six Sigma, coaching or mentoring implications emerged, and as a result many people proficient in teaching and training others in using the tool found it significantly changed the way they thought about and perceived the world.

So what does this have to do with what occurs in organizational leadership today? Recently, one of the founders of Six Sigma developed a Leadership Development paradigm called *The Great Discovery*, or the fourth generation of Six Sigma. I call it a paradigm because it represents a transformational framework that integrates leadership/motivational principles and practices across all contexts whether personal, or professional. I recently had the distinct pleasure of being one of the first people trained in this breakthrough process of thinking about the ordinary in an extraordinary manner. *The Great Discovery* represents much of where leadership development has been heading the past ten years: that is in the direction of positive psychology. Positive Psychology focuses on what is right and on the strengths within people.

*The Great Discovery* takes at least two steps further what other leadership development programs do not. First there is an emphasis on the *strong spirit* necessary to set and attain goals. What exactly is a *strong spirit* you might ask? It is not a leadership approach of the paranormal or of Caspar the friendly ghost. In this context *spirit* refers to meaning and desire. A person with a strong spirit is motivated from within, based on his or her character and need to succeed. If a goal or dream is not matched by the spirit to accomplish it then there is a good chance the person will not reach the goal or attain the dream. Most of us would rather not waste our time with chasing after things we are not willing to achieve. This amounts to a “Great Discovery” in that one will reassess their goals and dreams and pursue those things he/she does have the spirit for. Obviously once one discovers something worth pursuing where the spirit is strong, then that is a place to dream the doing and move into the planning and the actual doing aspects of the process.

The second aspect of *The Great Discovery* framework different from other leadership development programs is that it encourages people to recognize forces contributing to the achievement of goals and also those forces that become barriers to success. Identifying how barriers can be eliminated using people as members of your accountability team creates a synergistic system that has unique properties. This results in a tremendous amount of energy that contributes not only to eliminating obstacles, but also further

empowering existing positive forces. Another unique aspect of *The Great Discovery* is that these principles work equally well in one's professional, personal, or family life. The developers recommend I begin applying the process on a personal level and transition into using it from a professional or business perspective. I began doing this and as a result how I use my time and set goals has improved dramatically. My wife and I began using *The Great Discovery* in a couple of hours we accomplished having much clearer goals for our family. Just yesterday Saturday (November 15) we checked off as accomplished 5 of the 6 goals we had set and all were completed ahead of deadline. The one left is well on its way and should be finished before our deadline.

From a professional level the synergy produced as a result of learning to train others and implement *The Great Discovery* is incredible. Just being a part of the implementation within our company has spawned a level of creativity and focus we had not previously experienced. It has become a part of our culture and identity at Leadership Strategies Group. As leaders hear more about *The Great Discovery* they are encouraged to note how it is more than a leadership development program, it is a tool that can help redefine an individual or an organization (large or small) as extraordinary in a world that so often settles for what is ordinary.

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#### ABOUT the AUTHOR:

Paul S Markle is a member of Leadership Strategies Group, a business consulting and leadership coaching firm. Paul is passionate about helping people and organizations surpass their expectations and goals. Paul also teaches as an adjunct professor at Western Kentucky University (WKU). He holds a Bachelor's and Master's degree from WKU and will soon complete his Ph.D. in organizational psychology. He lives in Bowling Green with his wife, and two sons. He can be reached with questions or comments at [pmarkle@leadershipstrategies.com](mailto:pmarkle@leadershipstrategies.com) or 270-781-1336.