

Small Acts of Leadership
with
Big Results

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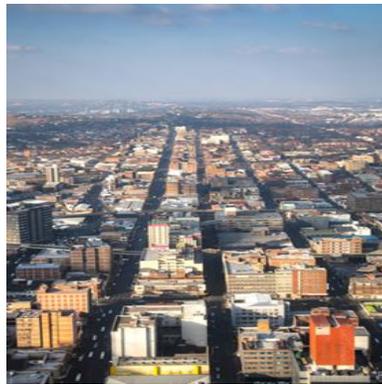
Fort Worth, TX

Small Acts of Leadership with Big Results

- **THEMES**

- Meaningful work and **organizational interventions**
- Meaningful work and ... **purpose, passion and engagement**

Experience in Johannesburg



One can argue ...

... that work can be **designed** to tap into intrinsic motivation for most people
... that organizations can speak to **what many people value** or that lead to the kinds of **impact that people strive to make**

AND, there is some support for both propositions

Even still, we are assuming that what we do ***on the outside*** will impact people on the inside

What if ...

... we created *organizational conditions* that **encouraged and supported people to do the things they found meaningful and** that supported organizational goals (mission, vision and values)?

Our research goal has been to document and understand the conditions under which people step up to lead, when it is not part of their formal job descriptions or job expectations.

We call this ***Small Acts of Leadership***

SAL

- **Emergent, self-authorized, leadership; not part of one's job**
- **Does not require special status, rank, privilege**
- **It is leading “at arm's length”**
- **Address a felt need versus something expected/demanded of them**
- **Can be personally risky**
- **People step up because, for them, it is the right thing to do**

Defined this way, a SAL is the definition of personally meaningful work

Why? Why now?



improve
innovate
modernize
AGILITY
change adapt
grow survive



Example: **Leading from the bottom**

- **Parkview Episcopal Hospital CEO**
- **CEO encouraged individuals and teams to make a difference on what was important to them**
- **Approval process – to get time and resources – that leaned toward strengthening proposals and approving them**
- **Dozens of self-authorizing individuals and teams answered the challenge**
- **IMPACT**

Example: **Leading from the top**

- **High Tech Defense Manufacturer**
- **Quality issues**
- **Supported with 6 Sigma training**
- **Quality improvement built into their job descriptions**
- **Nothing happened!**

Seeds and Soils

SEEDS - where meaning resides: purpose, meaning, values, impact, ...

SOILS - work & organizational conditions the encourage and support SALs

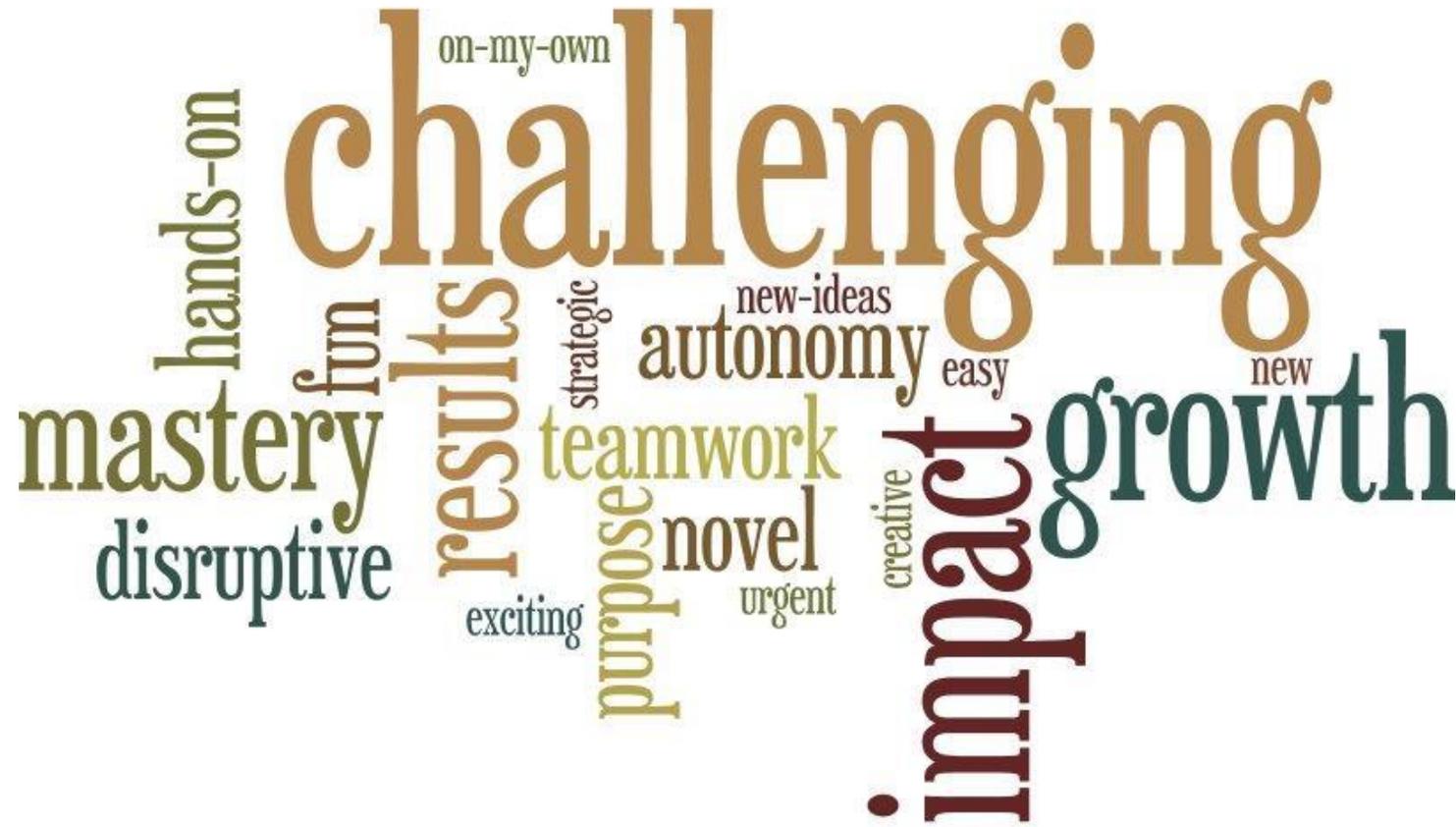


Some conditions that may create 'enriched soil'

- **Senior level inspiration, encouragement & support**
- **A personally meaningful challenge to step up**
- **Acceptance of self-authorizing behavior at the intersection of personal meaning and organizational needs**
- **Ability to pull together people from across the organization**
- **Appropriate enablement – coaching, training, feedback, ...**
- **A process for obtaining support**
- **An approval process that leans toward acceptance**
- **A process for learning and celebrating improvements and honoring those who created them**



SAL: The intersection between meaningful work and emergent leadership



The potential to matter – if only a small slice of greatness

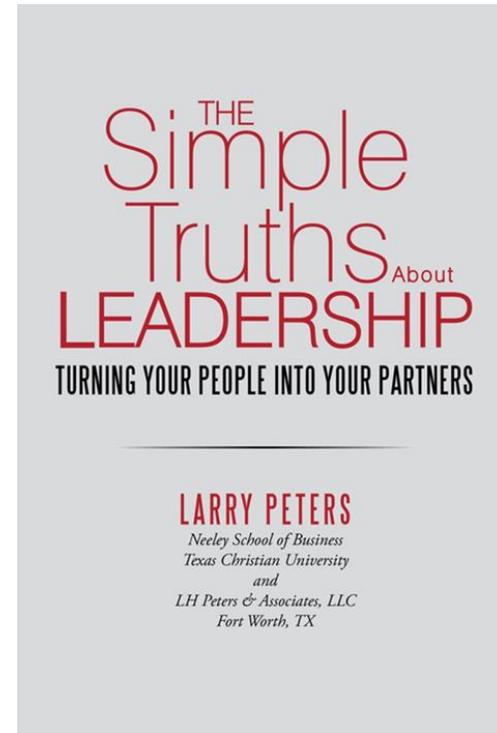


Our research program is aimed at

- ... digging deeper and learning more about the conditions that encourage and support SAL
- ... that encourage more meaningful work

I'd look forward to your feedback

Details about my initial story on the South African day-care center can be found in my recent book:
The Simple Truths About Leadership: Turning Your People Into Your Partners



Questions?