

INTEGRATIVE LEADERSHIP INTERNATIONAL

“Helping individuals and organizations become integrated.”

Lessons on the Path

July 15, 2012, Volume 2; No. 8

First Published: March 11, 2007

“Love, Trust & Fairy Dust”

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OBSERVATION: EXPERIENCE

Several years ago while I was in the role of Faculty Director of Business and Leadership Programs at the University of Saskatchewan, I met with a Senior University Leader, let’s call her Janet, to explore a potential collaboration to provide leadership development programs to our community. Our community included academic, business, government and not-for-profit organizations.

We had had numerous brief discussions previously, but this was our first face to face meeting to solely discuss collaborative programming. So there I was, sitting in her corner office at her meeting table. My intent in coming to the meeting was to share a vision, mission, passion and principles that would frame our efforts in building an ongoing collaborative relationship. Janet, on the other hand, wanted to discuss the structure, cost sharing, staffing and potential revenues that we would share in our joint programs. Who would lead the venture? How many people would attend? And, most importantly, how much money would we make?

Now I understood that both structural and visionary perspectives were important. However, my desire was to move from vision, to mission, to passion, to action, in a process that is inside out, or “involutionary”. Whereas Janet wanted to elaborate on the structures, systems, procedures and actions, and let the vision emerge in a process that is outside in, or what I would call, “evolutionary”.

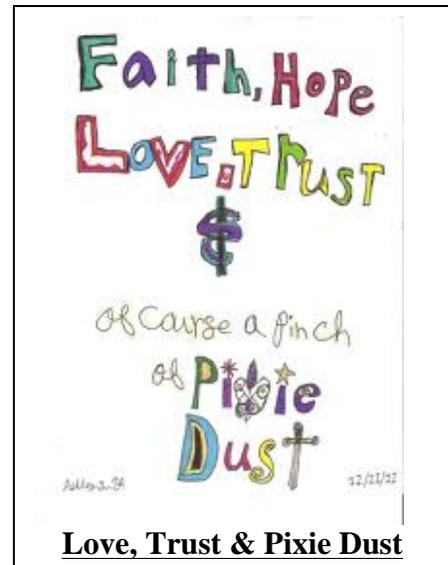
In our meeting, I spoke. She ignored my ideas and thoughts. And then she spoke. I ignored her perspective. This continued until finally, visibly frustrated, she put down her pen, glared at me and said:

“Lillas, I am talking about practicalities and you are talking about visions. What is important are revenues and how many bums we can get in the seats.” She then paused, leaned forward, pointed a finger at my nose and stated, “It seems to me that your approach to leadership is all about Love, Trust and Fairy Dust.”

I sat back and was instantly offended. It was a trigger event that was visceral and I could feel it welling up inside as if someone had punched me in my stomach. I felt like I left the present moment and descended, immersing myself in the feeling of being hurt, disrespected, unfairly criticized, and misunderstood. And in my descent, I remembered all those other times I had been told to teach hard skills and not soft ones, to watch the fluff and touchy feely, and to get real rather than focusing on the ideal of a situation. I thought I had grown a thick enough skin, but not that morning.

What surprised me was having this kind of personal attack come from a female colleague where I had believed we held mutual respect for one another and our work. I took a moment, got quiet, and reflected on Janet’s comment, saying it over to myself internally: “Love, trust and fairy dust...?”

As I reflected, I began to smile, first inside and then I could feel myself smiling on the outside, as well. I became aware that Janet wasn’t just Janet anymore. With her seemingly thoughtless comment, she had transformed in my eyes into all those others who had judged me for advocating a new holistic approach to management and leadership practice. She became all those who had condemned me for being appreciative and looking for the good, rather than being critical and always looking for what was wrong in life and work. She became all those who disrespected my approach to living a reflective life, for in my mind and heart, any other kind of life was not worth living.



Love, Trust & Pixie Dust

I then laughed out loud and began to see her comment not as a condemnation, but as a compliment. Finally, I said: “Thank you Janet for giving me the title of a book that I hope to write one day.” The meeting was over. Although I did not get what I expected, I did truly get what I needed on the path in that moment, and was grateful for having received it.

The whole “*love, trust and fairy dust*” trigger event took less than five minutes. Rather than reacting to life as I would have done in the past by taking Janet’s comments personally, withdrawing from our meeting in hurt and sadness, I engaged in the personal transformational journey of my own heart. I responded to her as if I was the highest, the best, and the noblest I could be—as my Ideal Self.

Afterwards, on further reflection and journaling, I concluded that I really do believe the path of Integrative Leadership is all about love, trust and fairy dust. Love is the essence of great leadership. It is the glue that binds us all together, for we must choose to love our life, ourselves, our family, our team, our clients, our work, our vocation, our organization. And if we do not, then we need to find a place in our life where we can serve and love, with passion and compassion.

I believe that trust is the essence of all relationships. Trust is built by being honest and truthful, keeping our word to ourselves and others, and following through on what we say we are willing to do. If we cannot trust ourselves, we cannot trust others, nor can we trust the Divine that is within us all.

And fairy dust can represent whatever is needed in the relationship, team, organization or situation. If you are confused, the fairy dust is clarity. If you are lonely, the fairy dust is meaningful companionship. If you are in despair, the fairy dust is hope. If you are in anger, the fairy dust is peace. If you are hurt, the fairy dust is healing.

This is true leadership from the very best of who we are and the Ideal we are all hopefully striving to become.

So Janet taught me a little more about who I truly was. In moving forward with our relationship, I felt I needed to speak clearly and practically into her listening so that she would have a desire in the future, to speak into mine. And Janet was absolutely right. Integrative Leaders are all about love, trust and fairy dust.

So what kind of fairy dust do you need in your life and leadership at this time?

APPLICATION: Integrative leaders are all about love, trust and fairy dust. What or whom do you love in your life? Who would you trust with your life? What is, and when have you recently used, your fairy dust?

INSPIRATION: “*Whole people bring a kind of magic into systems they are leading.*”
Elizabeth and Guilford Pinchot. “*All the world is made of faith, and trust, and pixie dust.*” **J.M. Barrie,**
Peter Pan.

INFORMATION: Hendricks, G. and Luteman, K. (1997). “*The Corporate Mystic; A Guidebook for Visionaries with their feet on the ground*” Bantam.

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