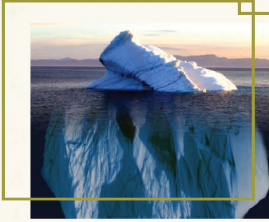


IMAGE ONE
[The Iceberg]





The Iceberg

THE ICEBERG REPRESENTS YOUR LEADERSHIP. THE 10% ABOVE THE WATER IS YOUR SKILL. THE 90% BELOW THE WATER IS YOUR CHARACTER. IT'S WHAT'S BELOW THE SURFACE THAT SINKS THE SHIP.

An iceberg is an interesting picture of the first rule of leadership. There's more to it than meets the eye. Most of an iceberg is below the surface of the water. You probably remember the awesome story of the Titanic. (Maybe you saw the movie!) The huge and unsinkable ship received five iceberg warnings that fateful night of April 14, 1912, just before it went down. When the sixth message came in during the wee hours of the next morning: "Look out for icebergs," the operator wired back, "Shut up! I'm busy." These were his last words over the wire before it all happened. Exactly thirty minutes later, the great vessel—the one whose captain said even God couldn't sink—was sinking. Hundreds of passengers and crew were drowned.

What was the problem? They forgot the truth about icebergs. What they saw above the water couldn't have sunk the great ship. Unfortunately they forgot that most of an iceberg is below the water line. They underestimated the power of the iceberg, and overestimated their own strength. What an accurate description of so many leaders today.

The iceberg is a great picture of leadership because so much of our influence comes from qualities we can't see on the outside. It's stuff below the surface. I estimate 90% of our leadership is made up from our character. And, our character is the sum total of our:

- Self-discipline (The ability to do what's right even if you don't feel like it)
- Core values (Principles you live by that enable you to take a moral stand)
- Sense of identity (A realistic self-image based on your gifts and personality)
- Emotional security (The capacity to be emotionally stable and consistent)

Many people make it into the limelight, and neglect their character. Your skill may get you to the top—but it's your character that will keep you there. If you don't have strong character, you will eventually sabotage your leadership. You can only fake it so long. We learned this in the 1980s when so many religious televangelists fell morally. We learned it again in the 1990s when many politicians fell morally, including our president. We learned it again during the first decade of the new century when corporations such as Enron, WorldCom and Tyco committed moral crimes and pro athletes were taken to court due to lack of character. You'd think we would have learned our lesson...but we didn't. As we entered the second decade of the 21st century, we heard stories of Tiger Woods cheating on his wife multiple times and Lance Armstrong cheating on his sport by taking performance-enhancing drugs. What's worse is, many of these people then lied about it all. My explanation? The iceberg. Weak character may begin when we are young, with lying and cheating on tests. It eventually takes the form of fraud, sex crimes, robbery and scandals. The Wall Street meltdown that came to light in 2008 is still affecting business in America today. The financial crisis we experienced was not due to a skill problem. It's a character problem. The scandals all happened in spite of the new legislation to combat corporate crimes. In other words, we didn't learn our lesson from Enron, back in 2002. We've had no moral compass.

It didn't start with our generation, though. About a hundred years ago, a boy grew up in Europe. His father's given name was Alois Schicklgruber. As a teen, he never learned about character. His parents never taught him right from wrong, so he began to come up with his own ideas and values. His father put him down when he talked about becoming a priest, and laughed at him when he spoke of being an artist. He was never valued, nor taught values. One night, he heard his mom and dad argue about moving away. Believing they hated him, he suspected they'd leave him behind. In anger, he put up an emotional wall and never let anyone get close. He later ran away. This boy grew up to be a man. The man became a leader. You know him as Adolf Hitler.

History proves that Adolf Hitler was a great leader, but he wasn't a good one. He failed to use his influence well. His skill and charisma were huge. His character was horribly flawed. He sabotaged himself—but not until he had slaughtered more than six million innocent people along the way. Leadership skills are important, but it does no good to develop your skills at the expense of your character and integrity. For instance, it would be easy to think that the mortgage banking industry is merely about finance, interest rates and accounting. While those elements are important, they are only the tip of the iceberg. The vast majority of that industry—or any industry for that matter—is about trusting people. It's stuff below the surface. The lesson? We must lead ourselves well before we try leading others.

Those who live among icebergs remind us there is such a thing as an iceberg with very little below the surface, like a floating ice cube. Most of its mass is up top, as though it is upside down. It's called a "whistler." You can always tell "whistlers" from other icebergs. They constantly drift, and they make a lot of noise. Sound familiar?

The bad news about icebergs is that it's what's below the surface that sinks a ship. When we have weak character, it will eventually damage our ability to lead. The good news is that it's what's below the surface that supports the tip. In the same way, strong character will hold you up long enough to use your skills.

REFLECT AND RESPOND

It is easy for us to sprint right to a list of competencies when we define leadership development. As Americans, we tend to want to immediately work on competencies or techniques. But those are all externals. True leadership is built from the inside out. Whatever happens on the outside of our life stems from what's happening on the inside. When we see a house that has stood for decades, we know it has a strong foundation. The visible is only a reflection of the invisible.

Why is focusing on the "inside" so difficult for us today?

Why do we put so much emphasis on the "outside" of our lives?

Leaders who last place "being" before "doing." They realize that leadership is about our person before it is about our practice. One psychologist, however, said we often become "human doings" before we are "human beings." What does this phrase mean to you?

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Take a minute and think about your own character. Do you have strong character? On a scale of one to ten (ten being the strongest), rate yourself in the following areas:

1. Self-Discipline (The ability to do what is right even if you don't feel like it)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. Core Values (Principles you live by that enable you to take a moral stand)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. Sense of Identity (A realistic self-image based on your gifts and personality)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. Emotional Security (The capacity to be emotionally stable and consistent)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Why did you give yourself the scores you did?

EXERCISE

Identify several things you really don't like doing. There may be a function around the house, in school or at work. It could be a chore like sweeping the garage or some small task you've procrastinated doing on the job. It may be listening to or interacting with someone who is difficult to connect with. It might be physical exercise or the discipline of waiting. It could be as simple as staying on a diet.

Choose two of these "undesirables" and make them disciplines. Deliberately do what you don't like doing.

Practice them daily for one week. Put them on the calendar and ask someone to hold you accountable to do them. (If you do them daily for two weeks, chances are they will become a habit!)

Afterwards, discuss the results. Did you feel a sense of accomplishment? Did you waver in your commitment? Discuss with someone how daily disciplines pave the way for conquering laziness and indifference. How have you gained personal victory by practicing these disciplines? How does this strengthen your character?

Legend has it that the following words were written on the tomb of an Anglican bishop (AD 1100) in the crypts of Westminster Abbey:

When I was young and free and my imagination had no limits, I dreamed of changing the world. As I grew older and wiser, I discovered the world would not change, so I shortened my sights and decided to change only my country.

But it, too, seemed immovable. As I grew into my twilight years, in one last desperate attempt, I settled for changing only my family, those closest to me, but alas, they would have none of it.

And now as I lie on my deathbed, I suddenly realize: If I had only changed my self first, then by example I would have changed my family. From their inspiration and encouragement, I would then have been able to better my country and, who knows, I may have even changed my world.

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