

## **APOSTATE OF LEADERSHIP: ATTRIBUTES AND ASSESSMENT**

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**10/10/09**

**Revised and Updated 2/12/10**

### **Introduction**

Beginning with the publication of Machiavelli's political treatise, *Il Principe* and more recently with the acceptance of the Weberian typology of leadership some sixty years ago, much has been written about the concept of leadership. The leadership literature has been prolific and its sources have been distributed among many academic disciplines and myriad practitioners, many of whom lay claim to having developed the paradigmatic definition. Likewise, its audiences have been varied. Leaders of both public and private organizations, students of leadership (both academic and aspiring stakeholders within organizations) and the public at large who yearn for "better" leadership in terms of elected officeholders all seek answers to the question of what characteristics make a competent or, even more compelling, an exceptional leader.

In our view this vast literature, both popular and academic, suffers rather than prospers because of its proliferation and popularity. First, there is an abundance of best-selling pulp publications authored by numerous legendary CEOs or celebrity organizational consultants each touting the definitive answer to leading an organization. Second, like leadership bestsellers, academic research and theory development have been researcher-centric rather than subject-centric thus focusing on splinter approaches to the study of leadership. As a general proposition, the academic literature is descriptive and prescriptive and, while theories abound, there has been little systematic research to support these myriad theories. The result is a compendium of case studies, experiential and bibliographic references which all focus on Holy Grail or magic-bullet solutions to the challenges of leadership, regardless of whether the leader is grounded in the public or private sector. Third, most of the writings have focused on the attributes of good leadership and arguments about whether good leadership is innate or can be learned. As of late, the leadership quest has focused on issues of charismatic and inspirational leadership or what is known in the field as transformational leadership. Based on various interpretations of the transformational leadership model, leaders in transactional or laissez-faire mode are not expected to produce "stellar results," and the more effective leader is one who will transform the organization, i.e. be the visionary and a change

agent. In effect, if either of these two attributes is not present, the eventual overall success of the leader comes into question.

Our purpose in writing this article is to bring another voice to the discussion of leadership and propose that, as a result of the current populous but simplistic approaches to theorizing about leadership, a very distinctive and destructive way of leading has been ignored. We will present the concept of apostate leadership to fill a very important gap currently missing in the present research on organizational leadership. We believe that in the current milieu, “leaders” or “aspiring leaders” involve themselves in a process of cherry-picking narrative depictions which fit their needs. The personal result is that they move to the next prescriptive idea, i.e. the newest idea in the search for that Holy Grail. Hence we have become ensconced in an era of leadership which features a vast array of unethical and outrageous conduct using the rationale of one or two quotes from a current preferred author on leadership to make such actions believable. Plainly put, as a result of the multifarious nature of conceptualizing leadership, many healthy organizations have been at the least put in jeopardy or ultimately have been put out of business.

Our intention here is not to disparage or ignore that valuable research has in fact been conducted. But we do believe that there is great need for evaluating current leadership theory and that a more robust and theory-cumulative assessment of leadership should be developed using a more thorough social science based methodology (the development of a critical framework, the forming of concepts and empirical propositions, and a formal study that provides description, prediction, causal investigation, and verification). We end this discussion by saying that there is much work to be done and that the assumptions of leadership theory overall need to be more closely examined, tested for empirical validation and the results widely publicized and discussed.

After criticizing what is and the disciplinary failures of testing, we now wish to add our voice to the leadership conversation. Our voice is one which rests on the foundation of a heuristic device and we encourage the oncoming generation of scholars to add our voice to their conversations as they systematically develop the field of leadership studies to a more mature level. There are very few, most notably Barbara Kellerman, who have focused on why bad leadership is not an anomaly but rather part of the entire scope of leadership study. We wish to support and advance that area of leadership study as it is important to the overall understanding and evaluation of leader actions and motivation. We eschew the disciplinary and personally driven silos which have resulted in a murky collection of leadership theories. We also believe that the study of failed or injurious aspects of leadership is as important as the study of successful leadership. Such a declaration of a more holistic study of leadership is particularly important during this time of U.S. organizational, economic and political crises.

The focus we present to the academy and interested practitioners is concern for those aspects of apostate leadership that can be described and evaluated. As mentioned above, most leadership conversations are concerned with the attributes or experiences of “good” leadership. But the proposition of apostate aspects of leadership brings to the discussion the idea of how to learn about a leader’s “true self” preferably before the person is hired

or how stakeholders may expel an apostate leader in the early stages of his or her tenure. This position stems from the very practical notion and from actual observation that it is almost impossible to get rid of an apostate leader once he or she has become entrenched in an organization.

### **Apostate Leadership as Concept**

We define an apostate leader as one who 1) deserts or recasts the organizational strategic direction for purposes of promoting self-aggrandizement and ensconcing a unilateral decision-making process for the ease of doing the leader's bidding, 2) continuously reneges on or dramatically changes major promises and agreements made to the followers and stakeholders at-large, and/or 3) ignores accepted industry or sector best practices for the sole purpose of continued fulfillment of personal gain. We use the term apostate leadership to symbolize a type of leadership which is not authentic to the development and sustainability of the organization, either from a people or outcomes perspective. From this perspective, apostate leadership has common attributes (both affective and behavioral) regardless of organizational type, its mission, or its place within the political, social or economic realm. These attributes result in the failure of the leader to conduct the organization's "business" effectively and in a way which would objectively and systematically deem it appropriate and in the spirit of achieving its explicit outcomes.

This is not a new idea. James David Barber in his landmark study, "Predicting Presidential Character in the White House," used a president's relationship with his mother to predict flexibility/inflexibility in presidential policy decision-making. The same can be true when discussing the role of Kenneth Lay in the downfall of Enron or with the latest scandal orchestrated by Wall Street legend Bernard Madoff who wiped out numerous endowments in the non-profit sector as well as individual investors. As is widely accepted, the issue with affective methodology is that its presence or absence must be analyzed through behavioral observations. While that may also be a debatable issue, what we hope to do is make a cogent argument that a mixture of affective and behavioral attributes which define apostate leadership can be viewed as a helpful contribution to the leadership conversation and provide a springboard for further study.

Our concept of apostate leadership is intersectional in a variety of ways. First, it spans the leadership literature by incorporating leadership aspects that are situational, trait, as well as behaviorally based. We believe that these three components constitute the main approaches to the current study of leadership. Second, apostate leadership can be theoretically applied to intersections of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, and other demographic attributes. We have observed that heretofore with few exceptions, except those pertaining specifically to women and leadership, the leadership literature is dominantly androcentric. Third, aspects of apostate leadership can begin to define an evaluative component which may help in a prophylactic approach to the hiring process, i.e. a way of avoiding failed leadership before the individual is invited into the organization. We believe that these three areas of apostate leadership can be empirically tested but we will leave it to others to make or criticize the case for doing so.

## Central Aspects of Apostate Leadership

An apostate leader is generally one who has abandoned allegiance to the codified behavior of either the industry or public sector in general and to the leader's organization more specifically. Colloquially, the individual is considered to be a renegade. We have carefully chosen the term "apostate" because we believe that the determination of renegade or allegiance abandonment is precisely what happens to individuals who are a certain type of failed leader. This type of failed leader is one to cause major harm to the organization and its followers because, unless one is looking for specific signs, disreputable damage has occurred before the problems are realized and action is taken. This type of failed leader further causes major harm to the organization and its stakeholders because his or her beguiling, clever, and political acumen in serving self usually camouflages problems by declaring them wins for the organization. It is only when there is a full-blown crisis that the organization members are asked to support the leader in a course correction. The apostate leader is the ultimate "CYA" Olympian. In short, apostate leaders are extremely destructible leaders because on the surface they appear to hold values and interests that are harmonious with the organization's stakeholders and yet their demonstrable behaviors prove otherwise.

While acknowledging the conundrum of defining affective systems without direct observation, we believe that the individual's value system plays an important and unique role in manifesting apostate leadership. We are not arguing that leadership success is innate. But we are suggesting that the individual's value system, while not immutable, is learned so early in life that trying to override the socialization process in terms of adult learning behavior is highly improbable, if not impossible. The question becomes how leadership study can propose ways to excavate the leader's true self from the fantasies that the individual and others in the inner circle of the leader assign. Without more in-depth study and development of tools to determine bad leadership as well as additional research elaboration of verified traits, skills, and behaviors of effective leadership, the existence of so many apostate leaders will prevail within every dimension of organizational leadership. Regardless of the number of leadership courses, training sessions, MBA's or books read, apostate leaders are flawed in ways which cannot be changed by creating new or acquired skill sets. Just as taking courses, earning an MFA and visiting endless museums cannot create a Van Gogh or a Freda Kohli, the academic community and those driving the private and public sectors must face some harsh realities about negative leadership latencies.

Currently, research and discussion on leadership is primarily focused on how leaders can make the most significant positive impact within and on the organizations they serve. Looking at leadership through this lens suggests what we want our leaders to be individuals who will help create new and better possibilities for both the future of the organizations they head and for the individuals within those organizations. We expect to rely on the leader's overarching vision of the context in which the organization will grow and on the person's skills and abilities to successfully achieve the desired results. Members of an organization make the assumption that the leader is presenting an

“authentic self” and that the beliefs, values, and general character of the leader are in cadence with the organization’s stakeholders. There are a number of leadership attributes or characteristics, however, that veil the true self and move an organization off-course or toward complete annihilation. These attributes are explained in more detail below. It should be noted here that, in most cases, it is not that what can be seen as positive attributes are lacking but rather that they have become skewed only to benefit the leader’s needs and outcomes. It is this negatively egocentric focus that makes an apostate leader.

With a focus on good leadership, if one combines the necessary behavioral aspects of leadership with the necessary affective attributes, the individual adopts a solid ethical foundation of behavior which guides decision-making. The linkage between such an ethical world-view and resultant behavior asserts that the leader will, under conditions of either general development or conflict, rank order the welfare of organizational needs and/or constituency needs in priority before needs of self-preservation or even self-need. This linkage rests on a type of Eurocentric legitimate authority which has evolved over the last few hundred years and implies a type of social contract between stakeholders and leaders, regardless of the nature of the organization or system itself, e.g. public or private.

The apostate leader in abandoning accepted codification develops a person-centric “ethical” standard which guides decision-making. The rank order of priority, then, is reversed. The apostate leader serves self first and engages in a form of coercive authority which may not send individuals to the guillotine but has the same destructive impact both on the organization and the lives of individuals within the structure. This behavior is very sophisticated and also acts as a cloak to gender, racial and other forms of discrimination at the highest level of organizational structure.

The general list of behavioral attributes associated with “good” leadership includes transparency, accountability, positive symbolism, trust, good to excellent communications skills (talking, writing and listening), a commitment and sense of responsibility to followers, visibility, ability to envision the future, and sense of appropriate rewards. The apostate leader may score highly in these behavioral attributes or may seem to be engaged in these behaviors. The apostate leader, however, uses these behaviors, not because they will serve the organization, but rather that they will serve the leader’s personal agenda. Apostate leaders engage in disingenuous behaviors as if they were the norm. They know what is expected of them but in the proverbial Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde dichotomy, there are two leader selves with the Dr. Jekyll being the public persona.

It is very important to note here that the apostate leader will engage in transparency only to the extent **that the followers need to become satisfied**. An apostate leader will redefine the parameters of transparency on an ad hoc basis. Such redefinitions will be general when specifics are warranted and visa versa. Budget allocations in institutions of higher education provide a good example. Although higher education is in the “business” of providing learning outcomes to students, many academic affairs budgets are not aligned with any strategic plan that ties curriculum learning outcomes and resource needs to the academic department or program level. New faculty positions are allocated on the basis

of retirements, increasing majors and almost never are re-allocated on the basis of decreasing majors or the learning needs for individuals educated in those arenas. A by-product of this system is slush funds given to favored managers and resources moved from the academic areas of the institution to other presidential pet projects.

The problem of accountability as a system also provides the apostate leader with opportunities for mischief. The recent debacles within major U.S. corporations have exposed some of this problem. Boards of directors do not seem to exercise systemic supervision of the chief executive officer and/or the chief operating officer and hence Enron, Tyco, General Motors, Goldman Sachs and other public sector disasters have ensued. Not only have boards avoided oversight responsibility, many directors believe that the exercise of such oversight is somehow “insulting” to the leader and other board members. An apostate leader in such a scenario therefore has a blank check. It is only when the house of cards falls that the apostate leader is exposed.

### **Specific Attributes of Apostate Leaders**

#### Trust

As a general proposition, apostate leaders are not interested in matters of trust in so far as it relates to followers or stakeholders. In their ethical paradigm, apostate leaders are interested in trust as it affects their relationships to their sycophants. In other words, the apostate leader asks the question: Do I trust YOU enough to do my bidding? This leads to the development of a very small “inner circle” (usually only one or two people) on which the apostate leader relies for daily feedback and validity. For the apostate leader, it is not about others having trust in the leader. That type of trust is only germane to legitimate authority and we have established that apostate leaders tend toward coercive authority. Rather, apostate leader’s “trust” is about how the leader is validated by those around him or her.

#### Leader-Follower Relationships

It is reasonable to assume and the sociological literature confirms that the individuals with whom one generally spends time, is attracted to, and seeks companionship with are those who share the same value system. This idea is referred to as the Homophily Principle. The Homophily Principle is rational. Shared sameness with others mitigates conflict and reduces anxiety. Rational human beings simply do not want to spend time with individuals with whom they are going to argue about every decision made, regardless of how significant or insignificant that decision is.

Apostate leaders are no different. They will, therefore, hire and surround themselves with individuals who share their value system. However, in apostate leadership there is a strong tendency for apostate attributes to metastasize within an organization. This process works in two ways. As a general or larger concept, the apostate leader will hire other apostates who have the same leadership behavior flaws and will generally carry out

the leader's decisions as directed, consciously purging themselves of personal foresight, e.g. lack of transparency, establishment and implementation of convoluted systems of accountability, and certainly turning a deaf ear to any criticisms of the leader's goals. Further, the apostate leader will use others as a conceptual mirror which reflects and validates "who is fairest of them all". If those in the inner circle do not provide the positive answer to such a query, they are removed as quickly as possible. There is no room for intellectual divergence in the apostate leader's cabinet. Thus, little, if any relevant or honest feedback is given to the leader.

As a more specific concept, the apostate leader will hire an individual either to carry out a specific function or to symbolize an idea which the leader cannot or does not want done or, more usually, when the apostate leader wishes to camouflage certain types of values. For example, the apostate leader who is also a misogynist may surround himself with a bevy of women (although they may not be competent and/or be sycophants) in order to assert his feminist values which are, in truth, absent. Other times, the leader will hire an individual to carry out a function or series of functions that the leader does not want to undertake and for which s/he can deny responsibility at a later date. Usually this person is a short-term hire. **Additionally, the apostate leader has already co-opted board or outside directors to believe that the organization is in agreement with the vision and direction presented.** Because the apostate leader has already co-opted board or outside directors in believing that the leader's vision is in synch with the organization's mission and vision, other leaders in the organization make an assumption that these new hires are a necessity for policy implementation and do not raise questions under the guise of "inappropriate board intrusiveness."

There is a lack of authenticity that is hard to detect until one focuses on where the apostate leaders spend their time and energy. Meetings are held, retreats are called, and there is a whirlwind of activity which, by definition, does not mean attainment of goals. So, by the time the organization realizes this level of apostate behavior, such apostate leaders are generally equated with characterizations like Teflon or total lack of accountability to the values or organization culture. At this point, however, the followers either feel castrated or are apostate in their own spheres of influence as to feel copasetic with senior administration. Either way, the apostate leader now holds all the decision-making influence.

### Communication

Apostate leaders are generally good talkers but poor listeners. They are experts in deniability. Generally other people do their writing. They avoid putting their ideas in writing because there is less opportunity for deniability to the written word. Their talk however is identifiable. First, they do not walk the talk. Second, they talk in headlines and not in footnotes. The latter style allows them to make up process of implementation as it is happening, thereby giving them the opportunity to gauge and direct how the process is personally affecting their role, reputation or ability to control the outcome. Apostate leaders tend to say different things about the same issue to different constituency groups. This style allows deniability on the grounds of the

followers/stakeholders' not understanding. While the followers are busily dissecting the "formal" agenda, the apostate's sycophants are implementing the real agenda.

Apostate leaders are fond of reacting immediately to issues with which they disagree either by articulating myriad reasons why the implementation is not possible or spending energy to emasculate those persons whom they see as the enemy. Apostate leaders are fond of lying. They overtly agree with no intention of carrying out the commitment. Apostate leaders suffer from selective recall. They deny that they ever said what they did say or that they gave a signal to others to begin forward movement. They look to others in the inner circle to corroborate their recollection of events. The leader's sycophants will make sure that information is filtered in a way to make the leader look good or squarely place blame on others.

Alternatively, apostate leaders do not listen well because they are processing the information only in terms of how it affects them personally, how it may transgress on resources which they control or how it will perceptibly add to or diminish their power, control, and/or reputation. Their standards of decision-making have little or nothing to do with the codification of good decision-making; it has everything to do with the leader in a visceral and personal way.

### Visibility

The apostate leader is skillful when it comes to visibility dynamics. The apostate leader is careful about visibility because visibility creates opportunities for exposure. Apostate leaders very often are fond of sending others to represent them at meetings and other venues that are not seen as important to the leader's personal image or professional enhancement. All matters of visibility are subjected to a cost/benefit analysis in terms of potential benefit or harm to the apostate leader's reputation. And if the person sent to represent the apostate leader unseeingly embarrasses or trumps the apostate leader, the apostate leader engages in coercive authority and control over that person. This type of deflection is frequently successful because the subordinate is not in a position to protest since he or she knows such behavior will lead to professional demise.

Apostate leaders are adept at evaluating the vulnerabilities of their subordinates and taking outright advantage of those vulnerabilities. Apostate leaders work under the radar. They are not fond of the media except when it can be used to control their agenda, i.e. they focus more on inconsequential issues which support symbolism and not substance. Rarely are decisions put in writing to the individuals responsible for the execution or outcomes of the choice made. They tend to want to be affiliated with outside national associations which give them personal visibility but will not promote scrutiny about the internal substance of their organizational agenda. Rather, they affiliate with organizations that endorse their leadership style and abilities.

### Vision



The apostate leader usually is not a visionary but gives the appearance of being a creative thinker. Most times this behavior is manifested through associations with “big name” persons in the field. The apostate leader is a frequent “quoter.” The apostate leader’s “creative” reputation also materializes through the legends developed as part of the leader’s upward mobility and successes usually from the point of view of someone who has worked with the leader over the years as one of his or her primary sycophants.

In reality, this type of leadership is based on a constrained view of the future. Apostate leaders generally try to duplicate what they have deemed successful at previous leadership positions regardless of whether or not it is duly appropriate. Part of this approach occurs because the apostate leader only has one way of being the leader so situation matters little. Expediency is a close ally of the apostate leader so others outside the inner circle have little time to assess the idea. The focus of attention is to fatten the leader’s resume and improve one’s personal reputation. Apostate leaders equate personal gain with organizational success, an assessment that usually is not accurate except to the apostate leader and those who surround him or her.

### Reward Systems

Rewards are both tangible and intangible and apostate leaders are interested in both types as long as they accrue to or reflect on them personally. In profit-making organizations, the desire for a greater profit is sought because stakeholders will attach success to the leader’s reputation. Higher profit may also result in bonuses, greater increase in stock options or other monetary benefits, some of which may not be known to or realized by all followers. In other types of organizations, the resultant success of institutional notoriety lies in increased personal reputational success. For example, this increased reputation may mean in higher education an elevated placement in the U.S. News rankings which are reputational in substance overall but do not provide the backbone for transformational change to learning or research. If an apostate leader is seeking a position in a larger university, this type of cyclical reputational enhancement is very important. Other benefits in both public and private organizations may follow, but these may be somewhat invisible to the followers due to lack of transparency and accountability.

Rewards to individuals are meager and for the few. It becomes very easy to understand who is in and who is not. Promotions from within are only to those who have proven unmitigated loyalty to the leader. Merit and bonuses evaporate with few exception and are replaced by only cost of living adjustments. Recognition is mostly through increases to operational resources where, again, the loyal prevail.

### Emotional Intelligence

Researcher Daniel Goleman popularized the idea that emotional intelligence (EI) is a major part of how we relate to others. His work emphasized the affective domain, an area of leadership that we recapped earlier as being developed early in our childhood and playing a prominent part in our ethical and values domains. Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee (2002) went on to write about emotional intelligence as a basic

(primal) aspect of all leaders. This affective part of leadership becomes a focal aspect of how a leader plans and acts. Others who have studied EI's relationship to leadership (most notably John Mayer, Peter Salovey, and David Caruso) determined that when the leader is in tune with his or her emotions, the leader is able to readily identify, use, regulate, and connect appropriately one's emotions with others.

Authentic connection with others is a major weakness of the apostate leader. Since achievement and initiative are purely for personal gain, the apostate leader spends little time developing sustained relationships except with only a few closely tested allies. The apostate leader is one who usually has a closed door policy or numerous people to hurdle to gain direct access. Contact with the leader occurs periodically but usually in a mass group environment such as holiday parties, stakeholder general forums, or required general in-house meetings such as "all-hands" sessions. The leader then postures at those meetings so that everyone with whom he or she comes in contact leaves the leader's company in a superficially feel-good mode.

Apostate leaders are not ones to have developed strong empathy or collaboration skills because they see no need to leverage the support of most people in the organization. There is either someone else to take on that responsibility or it doesn't matter at all. And if confrontation is lurking, the members of the inner congregation will circle the wagons so that the apostate leader is protected. This approach results in general organizational interpersonal and influential bankruptcy for the apostate leader. But even at this level of problem behavior and lack of support, the leader can still be viable because the commitment to self and maintaining outside influence remains high and disguises the issues that are occurring in-house.

### Mentoring

Serving as a mentor is a way to guide and champion another person. The person being mentored actually becomes a formal charge and the mentor serves by example as well as bequeathing advice and knowledge. The expectation is that the protégé will learn new leadership skills and move on to higher-level leadership roles.

Mentoring is one of the most dangerous aspects of the apostate leader and the results can prove disastrous. First, an apostate leader usually assumes the role of mentor for a close advocate who has already acknowledged and supported the behaviors of the leader. Second, the protégé is usually given a high visibility assignment or elevated title even when the person neither has the background nor the experience to assume such a role. The result is the protégé learns very quickly that superficial appearances and working with a small privileged group rather than inclusively within an organization are more important to realizing personal success as the priority rather than organizational success. Third, the apostate leader as mentor will ensure that the protégé becomes successful out of an egocentric need to prove the worth of his or her approach to leadership even if it means overstating the capabilities of protégé. The result is that the protégé is groomed to be a "Mini-Me" and will carry the apostate leadership style to another institution.

## **Organizational Culture As The Litmus Test For Recognizing Apostate Leadership**

Organizational culture has come to mean the sum total of the values, norms, beliefs, design, decisions, past honored experiences, and attitudes of an organization. It is the institutional psyche which through its conscious and subconscious messages presents what is most important for the organizational membership to understand about the institution. Culture also loudly transmits how the organization's work is to be done and what will be rewarded. While some researchers on the subject may claim otherwise, the overall organizational culture is determined, appropriately changed, or manipulated by the institutional leader. Without that ability, no sitting head of an organization or organizational unit would be successful.

For the organizational leader exhibiting positive transactional and/or transformational leader attributes and developing or making necessary cultural changes means building on the positive features of the existing overall organizational culture and its subcultures. Group decision-making and empowerment; high levels of notable and interactive communication; and clearly articulated and mutually agreed upon strategic plans, goals, and measured outcomes become part of the organizational regime. The apostate leader, however, only manipulates or intentionally ignores the existing culture. At best such a leader will give lip service to the goals and fundamental decision-making processes in place and use them for less consequential decisions to show support for their existence. The real work of the organization is realized in a parallel closed process created from the time the apostate leader is hired. Without such a deliberate dual design, the apostate leader could not be successful.

So what changes culturally during the time an apostate leader comes to and remains in the position? Unless you are trained to look, it is not until the apostate leader is securely entrenched in the position that the signs become totally clear. There are several persistent and sustained cultural indicators that point to the development of an apostate organization. If spotted and action taken early, the profundity and intensity of the wrongdoing can be diverted. It should be noted here that the apostate culture presented below is a collective view. Certainly one of these areas as illustrated here can be incorporated in other types of leadership. But the cultural aspects as described in *the aggregate* are the underpinnings required for the apostate leader to be successful.

### Values

The apostate leader most certainly wishes to remove any allegiance to a past approach even if it means that a long-standing value system is disposed. This refocus is necessary because the attention must move to the success of the apostate leader as person – personal vision, personal choices, and personal accomplishments. The first manifestation of how this refocus is communicated is by what the leader includes in his or her formal work space. The walls will be filled with framed accolades from politicians, community-based associations, newspaper articles and the like. Pictures will be of the leader with people who can be recognized by and be in easy eye- range of visitors to the office. All of this is

meant to relay credibility and enforce the notion of how important and experienced the leader is.

The apostate leader changes the institutional value system in one of two ways. The first approach is to give the appearance of building on the organization's past goals and asking for only minor changes in their direction. The apostate leader presents requested changes and sets the organizational divisions to work on how to incorporate them into the current processes. In the meantime, major changes are being planned by the leader with the inner circle but are only presented as minor changes in the beginning of the "change" process. These changes are usually in the areas of budget or personnel practices and/or adding a new department with a special focus to help develop the organization. At first, these changes appear benign until the organization membership comes later to realize that they are the focus of much bigger changes. By the time this realization occurs, the new practices already have become operational.

The second and alternative way for an apostate leader to make extensive value changes is to declare these changes as the reason why the person was hired. In an effort not to alienate the long-time employees, the leader will superficially acknowledge past organizational achievements and successes but will prey on workers' insecurities about being a failed or less than stellar organization unless major changes happen quickly. There is a great deal of activity within the organization but little productivity during this phase. It does not take long for both the organization's management and employees to recognize that support and reward are going to the groups and units who "buy into" the leader's preexisting vision. It quickly becomes clear at this juncture that the new vision is not an organizational effort but is being manipulated "from on high".

### Symbols

The issue of positive symbolism is variable. There is no question that symbolism creates emotional attachment which can override myriad substantive deficits for both followers and stakeholders. Apostate leaders, however, use symbols to camouflage their lack of implementation or override of the organization's mission and vision. Strategic plans for the apostate leader are a high display of symbolism rather than the culmination of a planning process. The apostate leader's strategic plan is either one of two types and in both cases never completely deliberated by the organizational membership. One type of plan contains dozens of goals and objectives that are a ragbag of messages. The second type is an overly simplistic set of three to five goals absent any specific objectives.

From either of these types of strategic plans, an apostate leader can then turn to several efforts in order to symbolically establish movement toward success. The leader starts with what appears to be a meaningful strategic planning process. The person makes it clear that such a process is symbolically associated with the transformational leader (read "good" leader) who is extremely proactive in setting and achieving organizational goals. But apostate leaders convert such a process and turn to the creation of a few pointed goals with no measured outcomes, develop self-defined report cards that declare achievement for the organization both to the internal membership and outside organizational boards

and stakeholders, and glossy annual reports which contain more personal focus than substance.

Another observable level of symbolism is through artifacts. The apostate leader enjoys the trappings of the position and this is demonstrated through a number of physical manifestations which make it clear who is in charge: office relocations and internal redesign of the spaces, changes to logos and websites, implementation or elimination of dress codes, pricey additions and unnecessary changes to technology for the sake of security and designation of who is important, reallocation of parking spaces, and renovations of existing buildings or office furnishings to name a few.

### Organizational Design and Structure

If one were given only a chart to review to determine the organizational structure developed by an apostate leader, there would be nothing curious about the design. An apostate leader does little to change a traditional top-down approach to management. As a matter of fact, the traditional bureaucratic approach is core to keeping the power base in the hands of an apostate leader. It provides the appearance of business as usual while allowing the leader to work around day to day activities and decisions. Even in those organizations where teams are the modus operandi, the upper-level administration reverts back to a traditional hierarchical framework. The apostate leader, more importantly, makes three key alterations to the structure at the beginning of his or her tenure.

The first alteration is building an insular central office staff that ultimately becomes the underpinning for the leader's inner circle. It is clear to this group that only those who will practice complete personal allegiance and communication restraint will be tolerated and will remain in the position. Personal loyalty above all else is vital and all who work in the "inner sanctum" practice such work ethics. Usually a position is created or revised to ensure that a personal confidant is included in the leader's office. This person is someone who has demonstrated total loyalty in the past. It is also someone who is known to shower accolades on the leader as well as defend the leader's course of direction under any circumstances. This person is the ultimate "yes man." (sic)

The second change is a major one as it has tremendous implications for the success of the apostate leader. Within the first few years of the leader's tenure, a fundamental sweep of key administrators and board members takes place. The executives or managers who stay or become the direct reports to the apostate leader are those who will neither challenge the leader's assumptions nor provide any intellectual disharmony to the staff discussions. The leader must feel secure in the fact that he or she is fully in charge. It is the singular vision of the leader that must prevail. The leader's staff or board members are meant to fill that role. Group think is the order of the day. And while the organizational boxes or titles don't necessarily change, the roles and effectiveness of the people in those slots do. Only those on the inside of the organization experience the difference in the overall management of the entity. In general, mediocrity and CYA become the working norms. It is not until there is news of gross negligence or the organization's downfall that the public/stakeholders becomes aware.

The third adjustment is probably the most revealing as to how an apostate leader works. In a very short time, the leader announces the creation of a new division or department. The reason given for this development is to ensure the organization (read the leader) has the ability to move quickly in those areas that will propel the institution to the next level of performance and success. In reality, this new unit becomes the entity where all the important ideas and changes are laundered. It becomes the hub major organizational change desired by the leader. The division is headed by someone handpicked by the leader usually without an official recruitment so that work can begin quickly and changes made swiftly before the membership can grasp the significance of what has taken place as the result of the formation of the new unit.

### Rituals, Rites, and Language

The apostate leader must be the focal point and fully in charge of the institution's rituals and rites. Meetings, ceremonies, organizational social events, and special communication are all fully orchestrated through the leader's office. Who is invited, who is given special seating, who is recognized, and who presents are all part of the grand design to relay the importance of the leader. And while these events may include the façade of communal recognition, planning discussions, or collective decision-making, in fact, all such activities of the collective are carefully orchestrated to realize the desired outcome already determined and developed by the leader and the inner circle associates.

Language becomes more formalized. Position and personal titles become more important when addressing an individual in the organization. Rules are sent from the leader's office concerning how written communication, both in and outside the organization, is to be handled. Fonts and letterhead standards become very important. The same is true for presentations. Mandatory guidelines providing the institutional membership information on how public presentations and support materials are to be designed are issued in a style manual. In more severe examples, there is an expectation either that the organization and the leader be represented somewhere in every presentation given and/or someone from the leader's office review all presentations prior to the actual events.

### **Conclusion**

Our characterization of apostate leadership is unsympathetic. We believe that such a harsh characterization is warranted. The current financial debacle which drove the U.S. to nearly a Second Great Depression is being exposed as a case study in apostate leadership. Such behavior emanates from a core of unethical standards which drive resultant corrupt behavior. This type of linkage is not a mystery and it has been presented historically and within every culture. What is troubling is the magnitude of the behavior and its ability to bring down major institutions and entire national systems. What is more troubling is how many apostate leaders are considered successes until much later in an institution's life span and the course that has already been determined is no

longer viable. Finally what is appalling is the apparent inability of scholars to address this reality in a systematic way to further the progress of the nation.

And what should we be contemplating about the future? As individuals who are dealing both administratively and professorially with the next generation of leaders, we are increasingly concerned. The next generation of leaders is captive to what we term the “Barney Generation Syndrome.” They have been socialized to a value of entitlement which has no parallel in recent memory. The community-orientation of the Greatest Generation and even the egoism of the Boomers cannot compare with the entitlement of the upcoming Millennials. There is little discrimination between opinion and substantiated fact; there is little sense of relative good to bad in any part of their lives since they have been told from early childhood that everything they have accomplished is good; they have been led by parents and educators to develop a great amount of arrogance and hubris.

When all is said and done, in our view, the most compelling variable regarding apostate leadership is the inviolate arrogance of the individual, coupled with an inordinate sense of entitlement. These are characteristics which psychologists frequently use to describe the narcissistic personality. But we believe that the apostate leader goes beyond a prediction based solely on personality type. That would be an oversimplification. Our discussion must be taken in totality in order to illuminate our concerns about apostate leadership and its implications for the future of all types of leadership in our country.

The hallmark of apostate leaders is that they are driven by a multitude of egocentric and unethical motives to make poor choices on behalf of their organizations and/or constituencies. The result is that they fail the organization and its stakeholders. In too many cases, ultimately the institution comes to an end. Sadly, with the exception of few notable examples, most apostate leaders move on before the damage they have done is recognized and then repeat the same behaviors in each succeeding institution which hires them.

For every organizational board, search committee, or academic researcher this reality should serve both as cue to the due-diligence segment of the hiring process or as the basis for a new academic discussion on leadership. Apostate leadership is about the drivers of poor choices as an indication of incompetence and non-effectiveness. And, as Dumbledore, the Chief Wizard and Head Master of Hogwarts, in the Harry Potter series reminds us: “We are judged by our choices, not by our abilities”. (Chamber of Secrets, p. 333 Rowling via Morris 2006). This holds true for the leaders themselves as well as for those who hire them and support the work they do or don’t do.