

THE *Art* OF LEADERSHIP

SELF-MANAGEMENT: Developing the art of leadership

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Have you ever wondered who invented the VISA card? Dee Ward Hock, is the inventor, founder and former CEO of the VISA credit card association. According to *Birth of the Chaordic Age*, one of the numerous books Hock has authored, the organization has an annual volume of \$1.4 trillion, and continues to grow in excess of twenty percent compounded annually!

A successful leader, noted member of the *Money* magazine Hall of Fame and the author of several books on business, Hock is one of America's foremost business visionaries. If an organization could capture some spark of the success Dee Hock built into VISA, who would pass it up?

Back in 1997, in an article in *Training and Development* magazine, author Bonnie Durrance, interviewed Hock regarding his management and leadership philosophy. The article interested me since, at the time, I was preparing a leadership education series for several local managers, but the article has some basic truths that have stood the test of time. Self-management, one of Hock's central themes in many of his books and presentations, was the theme.

Durrance reported that in sessions Hock has conducted with business leaders, he often asks those present what they consider the single most fundamental responsibility of a manager.

The audience responses often had something to do with controlling the people over whom they had power. However, Hock believes the real responsibilities for leaders begin with self-management. "Unless you do that," Hock told Durrance, "you are not fit for authority, you're dangerous."

Hock's hierarchy of relationship management, by which he explains his own success, is that "Job Number One" is to manage yourself. "If you look to lead," Hock is quoted in the online feature *Brainy Quotes*, "invest at least 40 percent of your time managing yourself – your ethics, character, principles, purpose, motivation, and conduct. Invest at least 30 percent managing those with authority over you, and 15 percent managing your peers."

The desire for control over others is a familiar and honest feeling among novice leaders but people who are moving ahead and progressing as leaders turn this desire for control in a constructive direction. They examine their own words and conduct, and how people respond to them. If they really want people to respond differently, they acknowledge their own responsibility to innovate in their own communications and behaviors.

If you want people to grow, you can't refuse to grow yourself. If you want people to follow you, you can't refuse the commitment to continuously become more worthy of being followed. Is surrender of the desire for control the first step in self-management toward true leadership? If you cannot manage yourself, how can you ever hope to manage anyone else?

Management of one's self, building personal ethics, wisdom, knowledge and competence, is a lifelong process. The technical knowledge and competencies you need may vary, but the specific ethics, wisdom and interpersonal competencies around which to focus our efforts at self-management are not big secrets, and are not very complicated.

The next time you pull out your VISA card, remember, Dee Hock may not be watching to see if you took responsibility for managing yourself today, but all the other people in your world are paying very close attention.