



turning managers into leaders

Merge's Monthly Mega Minute – May 2006

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Merge Gupta-Sunderji helps turn managers into leaders. Through engaging keynotes and facilitated workshops, she gives people specific and practical tools to achieve leadership and communication success. Contact her at www.mergespeaks.com or 403-605-4756

The birth of a butterfly

Recently, Dr. Cedric Gillott, renowned lepidopterist and professor emeritus at the University of Saskatchewan, explained to me the complex, highly-sequential, and intricately choreographed process of how a butterfly emerges from a chrysalis. First, the insect's abdominal muscles contract to increase blood pressure in the head and thoracic area causing the pupal coat to split along a line of weakness. Next, the flexible and still-folded adult butterfly crawls out. The blood pressure then relocates to the wings, legs and other soft parts to expand the body into the final, familiar butterfly form. For the next few hours, the adult butterfly remains at increased blood pressure levels until its coat gradually hardens into the new shape. Not surprisingly, any attempt to "help" the butterfly leave its cocoon is doomed to fail. If you were to assist the butterfly in leaving the chrysalis, the localized shifting of blood pressure would be disrupted, and a poorly-formed insect would result, unlikely to survive. An additional loss of lubricating fluids would occur as well, further preventing proper expansion of the adult butterfly. Bottom line: the butterfly needs to do the work itself!

Not a bad message for leaders either. Whether in our professional or personal lives, we often find ourselves in situations where we want to "help" the other person – perhaps an employee, a co-worker, or even a child. Yet sometimes, the greatest help we can offer is to let this person struggle through the process alone. Just like the butterfly, any attempt to assist will merely weaken the individual, and in many cases result in eventual failure. Just like the butterfly, the best that we can do is to let the person strain and work hard alone to give birth to eventual strength.