

The Leader of the Future

Harvard's Ronald Heifetz offers a short course on the future

By William C. Taylor

Without having a discussion with Ronald Heifetz, one of the world's leading authorities on leadership projects at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, as a scholar, a teacher, and a speaker, Heifetz is legendary for his popularity with students and for his impact on them. His students include former and current leaders from all walks of life: business executives, general managers, and labor union leaders.

The message of Heifetz's work is simple: In the social hierarchy, the leader is the one who is responsible for the success or failure of the organization. Heifetz's work is a call to action for leaders to take responsibility for their actions and to be open to feedback. Heifetz's work is a call to action for leaders to take responsibility for their actions and to be open to feedback. Heifetz's work is a call to action for leaders to take responsibility for their actions and to be open to feedback.

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How Leaders See

The leadership of business today. Everyone wants better leaders. What are great leaders doing to lead teams? How do they do it? The real test of leadership involves having the courage to face the world's toughest challenges. People around you who face reality will share with you something abstract or even insignificant. See you in business vision has

But the quality of any vision depends on its accuracy, not just on its appeal or on how

constituents to face tough, frustrating challenges, they are asked to protect those constituents from having to make adjustments. It's very hard for a congressman to go to his district and say,

"Gandhians: The Cold War is over. Time for 10,000 of you to lose your jobs." He has been

way to create a sense of urgency, to get people to understand that there are real issues that will require action in the near future.

That's why leadership is dangerous. Sure, you have to protect people from change. But

you also have to create a sense of urgency that will require action. You have to set priorities, you have to set their hearts, it's dangerous to try to persuade people to take

action. It's like this new idea, combine with American, why should leaders be regarded

as heroes? They're not. They're just people who are in a productive discomfort zone.

How do you keep people in a productive discomfort zone?

Attention is the currency of leadership. To a leader with formal authority, attention comes naturally. Fidel Castro can give a two-hour speech, and people will pay attention. So can Nelson Mandela. The president of the United States can give a State of the Union address that lasts an hour and 15 minutes. The big questions for that kind of leader are "How do I use that attention?"

What do I focus on? What do I want to be remembered for? How do I push the organization in the direction of my core constituency? You have to remember: Drawing

attention is not the same as leading. It's just a necessary step in the process of leading.

What does it mean to be a leader? It means to be in a position of responsibility. A true issue is one in which there

is a real stake for everyone. A false issue is one in which there is local interest, but

readiness to change would be just the fact of the matter. It's not a real issue. It's

enormous — and quite dangerous. It needs to be done, but it's different from working a rope

issue.

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