



Personal Mastery and Organizational Change: Leadership from the Inside-Out

By Dr. Michael O'Brien

Today's organizations are facing unprecedented marketplace changes, and most are scrambling to find their competitive advantages. Many are changing not only their strategies but also their structures, work processes, employment policies and management practices. Many are also discovering they need to change that elusive but powerful aspect of organizational life known as *culture*—the collective psychology of the company. The biggest challenge for leaders today is altering what people believe and how they think about their work, what they expect of each other and their relationship to the organization.

The Job of Leadership

It is leadership of cultural change that is the most challenging because it is not straightforward; you can't reengineer it in the same sense that you can reengineer core business processes. Creating an empowered, high-integrity work force, for example, will take more than words on posters, more than lip service. It will take a deep and sustained effort on the part of everyone in the organization—and the leaders must go first.

Leadership to a new culture, to "values in action," begins inside with one's head and one's heart. It can't be delegated to others or relegated to the "back burner." Rather, it must be embraced by those who choose to lead as both a very personal and a very public process. Leaders must change themselves, while those who *may choose* to follow watch very carefully to see if their "talk matches their walk." If they see congruence they will begin to change, and the culture will slowly begin to shift.

So, leaders must be engaged in the process of *changing themselves*—how they think and feel, what assumptions they make and how they behave—as a major vehicle to inspiring the same value-based changes in others.

Personal Mastery, the "inner game of managing change," is a practical discipline leaders can use to create and sustain change.