



Stanford eCorner

A New Narrative for Leadership

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Based on the fact that the stories we tell ourselves have profound psychological impacts, magic experience designer Ferdinando Buscema suggests a new narrative model for successful, modern leaders.



Transcript

So the idea of the narrative creates reality. And with this, we mean that the way we - how we use our words and our language has a very specific impact and a fact on how we perceive reality, so we perceive reality mediating it through our own language, and how we map, experience and how we processes them has a very specific psychological impact on that. So basically how we decide to say things, they have a very specific inner outcome. And this is a known fact to people - I mean, to linguists who, according to the kind of metaphors and language structures that we use, we shape our understanding of reality and this is - of course it has to do with the idea of leadership itself and calling it magician leadership instead of, for example, warrior leadership, which is the typical narrative web, narrative domain that it is typically associated with the metaphor of leadership over the last decades. Typically in the 19th and 20th century that were specifically characterized by control, by certainties, by predictability, typical metaphors had a warrior like, in control like - command and control like flavor. Shifting towards complexity, we are witnessing a shift towards a more organic set of metaphors and the idea of magic itself is a way of addressing the unknown and mysterious aspects of reality, which are not under our immediate control. Now a very nice quote that I came up with is that the universe is made of stories, not of atoms. And according to this American poet, the way how we tell ourselves stories is another way of addressing the fact that these stories take shape in our reality and we, of course, we have our own personal narrative and also there are collective narratives. Narratives also shape a corporate culture or a nation culture and we have also global narratives so there are a multiplicity of levels of narratives. And talking about leadership, a very interesting way of reframing the idea of leadership nowadays is through this piece of writing 'Leadership in the 21st century is like dancing on a slippery floor; if you try to stay in control, your energy will be focused on not falling, but if you relax and use the wax on the floor to facilitate your dance moves, it will be a lot more fun and effective.' So this is another way this - and I found this metaphor very interesting to address the idea of leadership, to go beyond the mere command and control attitude.

So just go with the flow and hopefully have fun with it.