CHAPTER 5

So what exactly is Naked Leadership?

If you want to understand a concept, it often helps to put it into context so let's start with the Leadership part and get Naked later.

Probably the most traditional way to define Leadership and Management is to look at a dictionary. So here goes:

Lead:

To guide on a way;

To direct the operations, activity or performance of an orchestra; to go at the head of; to be first.

–Merriam Webster Dictionary

Lead:

To show the way; to influence someone to do something in a particular way.

Leadership:

Refers to the set of characteristics that make a good leader.

Management:

The *control*[2] or organisation of something.

–The Cambridge International Dictionary of English

My *Naked Leadership* course books contain this interesting example of the ironic curiosities of the English language:

Lead (verb):   Cause to feel, think or behave in a certain way. To guide or direct. To go before…

Lead (noun):   Soft heavy dense grey substance, often used for weighing things down.

Both words are spelled the same way (if pronounced a little differently) and each also shares some characteristics of leaders I have worked for. How about you?

I choose to believe that it is not only a matter of *what* we think leadership is but also *how* it is carried out that makes the difference. That's why, at the risk of inviting a cliché about writers and the overuse of Eastern philosophy, I would like to offer some gems of wisdom written by Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu.

While they were expressed over 2,500 years ago, these observations are just as accurate and applicable in the 21st century as the day they were penned (or quilled) and were instrumental in the formulation of the philosophy behind *Naked Leadership*.

> *A skilful officer isn't warlike.*
> *A skilful fighter isn't violent.*
> *A skilful employer places himself below his employees.*
> *This is called the* te *of not competing.*
> *This is called the skill to use men's abilities.*

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[2] Italics mine