Harvard Business Review Readings

<u>What is the meaning of leadership?</u>

I believe that Kotter defined the meaning of leadership most clearly and in a way that resonated with me. Leadership is about coping with complexity and coping with change through setting direction. Leadership is about aligning people around common interests. Leadership involves motivating and inspiring. Leaders focus on developing leaders and developing organizations that focus on developing leaders. Leaders create strong networks of informal relationships - the kind found in companies with healthy cultures - help coordinate leadership activities in much the same way that formal structure coordinates managerial activities. Kotter does not explicitly state a focus on living systems, however his description in column 3 of page 93 certainly defines the same.

<u>What about leadership strikes me as important?</u>

The attributes that I find most important are best described in the work by Juanita Brown and David Isaacs. In their paper *Conversation as a Core Business Process*, they define this attributes as the ability to frame questions that matter, convene learning conversations, support appreciative inquiry, foster shared meaning, nurture communities of practice, and use collaborative technologies. These attributes are those needed to lead in a living system and are based on self-organization rather than top down broad scale change efforts. This is very interesting to me. I also like Kotter's recent work in "Leading Change" as it clearly outlines the extraordinary work that needs

to be done to nurture change. In both works, creating strong and diverse networks of conversational relationships is critical to foster emergence.

How is context important to effective leadership?

In the HBR article by Kotter, he clearly describes those organizations that actively nurture the development of leaders. These organizations are few and far between and I do not believe represent a realistic view of how leaders emerge across our world. I strongly believe that leaders can and do emerge in almost any context. In impoverished countries, in concentration camps, in homes and in schools, it does not matter; leaders step up and accept the challenge to lead. Not because they were selected, but because they chose to make a difference.

How do non-business vs. business contexts differ?

The major difference in business contexts is the profit motive. I believe that the quest for greed and power are too strong of a barrier for many to step up to the plate. This limits leadership only to those very few who understand that they are there to serve, not themselves, but the greater good. In a non-profit motivated venue, I believe that more leaders emerge. More are passionate about something other than making money. More have opportunities as most of the organizations and communities in which the work are much smaller than most major corporations where leaders are developed. It is in these areas where I believe we see true leadership emerge.