



Center For Hispanic Leadership Institute for Talent Development

The Six Lessons Chile taught America's Corporations about Hispanic Leadership

By Glenn Llopis, October 2010

Over the past three years the United States and its people have experienced crisis and change in ways we have not seen since the Great Depression. From the missteps of corporate giants like BP and Toyota, to our own economic meltdown that was driven by greed and distrust, we have suffered setback after setback, and our confidence has waned accordingly. But now, it's time for us to learn some new lessons about business leadership in the face of tremendous adversity – and from an apparently unlikely source.

While most thought that it was impossible for the 33 miners in Chile ever to see the light of day again, Chile's leadership sought to enable an heroic rescue by sticking to some fundamental leadership principles for the beginning of a new era:

- 1) Embrace the power of diversity,
- 2) Quickly manage crisis and change,
- 3) Propel new types of innovations,
- 4) Allow a country and its people to be their own brand,
- 5) Function across generations, and
- 6) Seek to be successful and significant throughout their courageous journey.

These six principles represent the competencies of a new enlightened form of leadership that must be taught and adopted in America's corporations: *Hispanic Leadership*. Given today's fiercely competitive global market landscape, we must seek to give people in America's corporations new purpose, put a premium on innovation, and embrace ethical leadership on driving performance development. This is what Chilean President Sebastián Piñera and the 33 miners did to seize the opportunities for survival that most found unimaginable. They taught us how to apply the following six characteristics that define *Hispanic Leadership* and that represents "the new normal" in how we should think, act and innovate in the workplace:



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Immigrant Perspective (embrace the power of diversity):

Like an immigrant who comes to a new country with nothing but faith, hope and love, we do not have myopia where opportunities are concerned. We see that opportunities are everywhere, every day, and we make the most of those that cross our path. Many times they are opportunities that others don't see.

- *Above the surface*, the Chilean Government sought to seek intelligence from a diverse audience that included Australia, Spain, Germany, Canada, the United States and many others.
- *Below the surface*, the 33 miners applied their faith, hope and love to help one another survive in the face of tremendous adversity.

Circular Vision (managing crisis and change):

The experiences of our family's past intervention with crisis and change in our mother country wire us to anticipate false promises and unexpected outcomes. Because our immigrant perspective allows us to see opportunities others cannot, we are proficient at anticipating crisis and managing change before circumstances force our hand.

- *Below the surface*, the miners utilized the food, clothing and communications resources provided to them by rescue teams to manage the crisis and change to their lifestyles (2500 feet below the surface).
- *Above the surface*, Chilean President Piñera anticipated the crisis and *immediately* planned for the best strategy and implemented solutions by applying internal resources, collaborative global intelligence and empowering his people to manage the crisis at hand.

Latin Passion (allow its country and its people to be their own brand):

Our ability to inject intense passion into everything we do makes us potent pioneers. We not only blaze trails few would go down, we see them through to the end. Our passion opens new doors of possibilities that we aim to share with others.

- *Above the surface*, Chilean President Piñera was passionate about creating new possibilities from his act of leadership - for the people of Chile that he aimed to share with the world. He revived a sense of nationalism by utilizing the strength and power of Chile's generous purpose and cultural promise.
- *Below the surface*, each of the 33 miners assumed roles and responsibilities that they were trained and most passionate about it. They were each assigned to "be their own brand" in meaningful and purposeful ways that focused on the betterment of a healthier whole.



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Entrepreneurial Spirit (propel new types of innovations):

In America, you might be an entrepreneur. In Latin America, you must be one to survive. The ability to see and seize opportunities to build relationships, advance commerce, and better humanity is an inborn survival mechanism.

- *Below the surface*, all 33 miners were on a special diet to ensure that they would fit in the FENIX capsule that included extreme levels of sodium to maintain high blood pressure – and ensure that blood was flowing through their brains just in case they fainted while being hoisted to the surface.
- *Above the surface*, the Chilean Government sought the expertise of NASA and some of the best engineers in the world to design and build the FENIX capsule (6'4" interior height x 22" diameter) that would hoist each of the 33 miners safely to the surface.

Cultural Promise (functional across generations):

Our familial style of relating allows us the good fortune of having history on our side. The strongest bonds in business, across the entire value chain, occur when employees, partners and distributors alike are treated like family. The treatment is reciprocated and opportunities continue to arise. Our cultural promise is that success comes most to those who are surrounded by people who want their success to continue.

- *Above the surface*, Chile converted what was a deserted mining area – into **Camp Hope**: a facility that would provide food and shelter for the miner's families, schools for their children, and a church to keep faith alive. Camp Hope was a platform for unity and hope; where everyone was treated like *one family*.
- *Below the surface*, the miners ranged in ages of 19 to 63. They operated as one family and their legacy will be defined by the bond they created to ensure that their success continues together *above* the surface.

Generous Purpose (Successful and Significance)

It is in our blood to give. We are raised to consider others' needs as much as our own. This begins with giving inside our family when we are young, and then, when we are older, we are taught that we are a part of a larger family all around us. Our propensity to give to others from our harvest ensures us a perpetual harvest.

- *Below the surface*, everyone felt a sense of social responsibility for one another, their families and their country. The miners realized that they could each serve to inspire hope and opportunity for their country and the world.



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- *Above the surface*, the Chilean Government masterfully created roles of significance for everyone on the rescue team that captivated the hearts of the world. They planned each step in the rescue mission with purposeful thought, ethical intentions and calculated impact in order to teach the world how to do the same.

History was made in a country populated by only 17.1 million people (ranked 30th in the world) with a GNP of \$161 billion (ranked 46th in the world). It cost Chile an estimated \$15-\$20 million dollars to save 33 lives, revive a sense of nationalism, unite people and restore faith and hope – the world over.

Many have called this moment “the Miracle in the Mine.” I call the past 70 days the moment the world witnessed *Hispanic Leadership* in action. America’s Corporations need *Hispanic Leadership* to unite, empower and expand the capability, responsibility and accountability of its people - to serve for the betterment and advancement of a healthier whole. When people work as one, regardless of hierarchy or rank (*above or below the surface*), the opportunities for survival, renewal and reinvention are unlimited.