

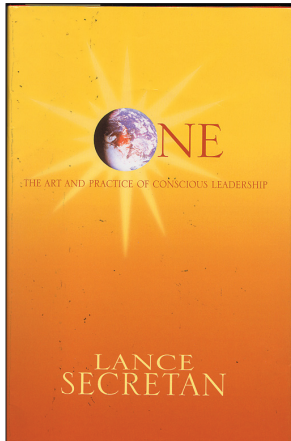
Book Review Courtesy of Halton Hills Library

One: The Art and Practice of Conscious Leadership

Lance Secretan
Secretan Centre 2006
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Secretan begins with a statement about our current mindset, he says, "Oneness may be the ideal, but separateness is the habit. And habits are hard to break." He insists that for thousands of years we have been perfecting our habits of separateness in our thoughts, reasoning, media, relationships, religion, politics, and even parenting.

Through examples, insightful quotes, and concise story telling Secretan describes the six principles central to his theme. He refers to them as the CASTLE principals: Courage, Authenticity, Service, Truthfulness, Love, and Effectiveness. He claims that diligent application of these principals have proven to dramatically improve organizational performance and personal success for thousands around the world. He honestly admits that the idea of oneness is by no means his invention and that we lived in an effortless state of oneness thousands of years ago.



I think it is prudent to avoid discussing selected parts of his book outside the context of the whole, especially given the theme; so, instead I'll attempt to describe what inspired me while I read.

Secretan is challenging us to return to this way of living and leading. Applying the CASTLE principals in our own life has the potential to literally reshape the lens through which we see the world. We will see the same things in our workplace and personal life as before; however, eventually we will begin to see oneness and discover a deeper value in everything.

Dedicate some time to open your mind to these ideas. Make a decision to step beyond a mere understanding and make an effort to practice the CASTLE principals in your own life. If we put these ideas to the test, then perhaps we should expect to see new leadership effectiveness and personal

growth.

For more information check out Secretan's blog and other resources on his website.

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Our ongoing national health care debate is more than a social or political concern: it is a business issue. Everybody is aware of underfunding; disputes over who should pay; and the shortage of doctors and nurses. Likewise, we are all familiar with the international trend to obesity. Few people are surprised by the fact that almost 48% of Canadians are overweight or that only one in five Canadian adults is physically active. What we fail to do in these discussions is to "connect the dots" between lifestyle and health. Also, we typically overlook the relationship that health has with the economy.

Sixty to seventy percent of major diseases are associated with modifiable environmental risks. This means that most major diseases could be prevented or ameliorated by lifestyle changes. Our society can do more by investing in prevention than can be accomplished with technology or treatments. A focus on wellness rather than illness has the greatest potential. A wellness programme is not a luxury: it is a sound business practice.

Being overweight is a major cause of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, gallbladder disease, and is a contributing factor to some forms of cancer. Obese people have joint replacement surgery at three times the rate of others. Only 18% of joint replacement patients have an acceptable weight. The number of morbidly obese people in Canada has quadrupled since 1985. These health care statistics have a meaning for the economy. Inactivity kills 21,000 people prematurely and costs the Canadian economy \$3.1 billion annually. The cost to the economy is much more than the money directly spent on formal health care. The job performance of people suffering from chronic illness deteriorates leading to increased errors and accidents.

Obesity and smoking are not the only culprits. Stress is making people physically and mentally ill. Work is typically cited as a major cause of stress! Some estimates for the productivity losses in Canada from depression, substance abuse, and stress are as high as \$33 billion a year. This is aggravated by a shortage of qualified labour. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business reports that small and medium-sized employers across Canada are having difficulty finding the workers they need. This persistent shortage threatens small businesses potential to grow. If a firm is already short-handed, the illness of even a single worker can have a major impact. Sick workers undermine productivity and competitiveness.

The bad news is that most adults put their own well being at the bottom of their priority lists. Work and family come first. Consequently, people

procrastinate about beginning a fitness programme. Even worse, such activities are rarely sustained. Exercise is generally the first thing to be dropped when people experience a time crunch. Though even many psychiatrists are ignorant of this fact, studies show that regular exercise is effective at reducing the symptoms of depression. We can reduce the losses from both physical and mental illness with regular exercise.

The good news is that enlightened companies have recognized that it is in their own interest to promote the health of their workers. They may offer in-house fitness programmes or incentives to participate in off-site activities. Wellness programmes are cost effective. For every dollar invested in health promotion, companies save \$3 to \$8 in the form of reduced health care costs and gains in productivity. Ideally, health promotion should be comprehensive and include all positive lifestyle changes: smoking cessation; exercise programmes; dietary changes; and stress reduction programmes.

The optimum wellness programmes are activities conducted right in the workplace. The great advantage of in-house programmes is their convenience – it is easy to exercise before or after work, or during lunch. The ultimate plan would be exercise breaks scheduled throughout the day. Large corporations such as Toyota in Cambridge or General Electric in Mississauga have built their own fitness centres. They offer the full range of weight machines, free weights, and a variety of fitness classes such as yoga and aerobics.

Smaller companies will rarely have the resources to emulate the company owned fitness facility, but many creative solutions are available. What can a small firm do? Here are some examples:

- Employ an independent instructor for an exercise programme that does not require equipment.
- Hold periodic short-term exercise programmes to pique employee interest in various activities.
- Contract a trainer to design and launch a programme that can run without the supervision of a fitness professional.
- Institute a walking programme.
- Subsidize memberships at a gym or martial arts school.
- Create an alliance with a gym or martial arts school. Perhaps you permit them to advertise in your newsletter in return for a discount for your employees.
- Provide information resources. Allow local fitness groups to post flyers or lead boxes on your premises.

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