



ONE: The Art and Practice of Conscious Leadership Part 1

by Lance Secretan

Editor's Note: So much of management science has survived by making life so complicated, Academy Fellow **Lance Secretan** told me last week. "The key to success in business, or in life, is simple. Do two things: Love people, and always tell the truth."

He has also taken Occam's razor to the bloated library of leadership science, reducing it to six principles:

Courage

Authenticity

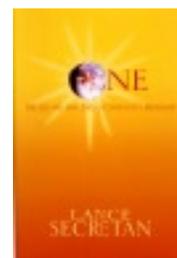
Service

Truthfulness

Love

Effectiveness

Lance's new book *ONE: The Art and Practice of Conscious Leadership* explicates each of these. It was released just last week. In this edition we reprint chapter one, and next week, the chapter on Effectiveness.



ONE is Lance's fourteenth book, but the first to be self-published. Part of an entirely new model of bringing Lance's methods to the world, it is available at Amazon.com, and at www.secretan.com.

Chapter One

The New Imperative of Oneness

We have been living with an illusion: that we are separate. Whenever we experience pain or sadness, it is because we have become separated from what, or whom, we love. And whenever we are inspired or joyful, it is because we are one with what, or whom, we love. All human challenges and successes can be explained through this awareness.

When we are in love with someone, it is as if we are one: two souls, one flame. That is because we are.

*If we have no
peace, it is because
we have forgotten
that we belong to
each other.*

— Mother Theresa

When we love doing something, or something makes our hearts soar, we feel as if we are one with it, because we are.

When we ache over the imperiled state of nature or the rising level of violence in the world, we ache because we feel the same pain. We share it because we are one.

Imagine a bright, sunny day. You are relaxing at your favorite sidewalk bistro. The enticing shrimp cocktail you ordered arrives, and you marvel at its beauty and presentation. As you relish the gift of brilliance from your chef, your mind wanders. You ask yourself the question that often crosses your mind when you encounter creativity, excellence, or mastery: "How do they do that?" In this case, you wonder, "Where did this food come from? What did it take to prepare it so beautifully? Who was involved

in making this special treat?" In your reverie, you are transported far away, to seafaring nations and peoples. More than a billion people reside within 100 miles of the ocean, from which many of them derive their livelihoods, while all depend on a measure of stability between sea and land.

World shrimp production has ballooned from 2.9 million metric tons to 4.5 million in the past 15 years alone, with Asian production leading the world. Thailand, now the largest producer, earns \$2 billion annually from its shrimp-ing industry. America imports 88 percent of its \$4-billion shrimp purchases, and prices have dropped by 50 percent in the past ten years. Half of the shrimp production is farmed. Fishing nations have mastered shrimp farming so well that it now accounts for 50 percent of world production. The shrimp offered in restaurants and food stores today costs only a dollar a pound to produce.

But to create shrimp farms, it is necessary to remove mangroves. Mangroves once covered more than three-quarters of the world's tropical coastline. Today, they cover less than 37 percent. Just 50 years ago, the shores along the rim of the Indian Ocean were ringed with endless acres of mangroves—swampy rainforests hugging the edges of both land and sea. Mangroves are storehouses of biodiversity, home to the world's richest variety of salt-tolerant trees, ferns, and shrubs. Hundreds of different birds live in them and mangroves also shelter migratory species. Mangroves are rich in sea life, including plankton, mollusks,

and shell- and fin-fish. They are well-populated with crocodiles, monkeys, wild cats, lizards, and sea turtles.

As the region's developing countries have expanded and diversified their economies, protective reefs, sand dunes, and mangroves along coastlines have been steadily removed. In the past few decades, more than 30 percent of the world's mangrove forests, covering tens of thousands of miles of coastline, have been destroyed to make room for shrimp farms. Shrimp farming has resulted in beaches being cleared of mangroves and in an enormous rise of tourism, hotels, big cities, and other coastal developments.

On their way to their fishing boats early on the morning of December 26, 2004, fishermen noticed an odd absence of the usual wildlife found along their paths, but paid little attention to it. As they began trawling, there seemed to be an extraordinary abundance of fish: mackerel, squid, red snapper, sardines, and white snapper. They had never seen such profusion or diversity. In fact, yellow catfish, tiger fish, and other species not usually seen in these waters were, for the first time, remarkably abundant.

On that morning, fishermen long used to variable fishing conditions were giddy with excitement, hauling in their catch as fast as they could, convinced that their singular luck could not last for long.

During the previous three weeks, there had been a strange and total absence of fish, and the ocean had become unusually deep. And at this moment, very strangely, the tide seemed to be receding further and faster than they had ever seen before. Coral reefs appeared in only four meters of water where the sea was normally 20 meters deep. Something odd was happening. The tide was supposed to be coming in, but it was going out. Nobody on the beach was paying attention, but a kilometer of sand had replaced the space where normally there was sea. Fishing boats were sitting on wet sand.

In the distance, perhaps a kilometer away, a large wave could be seen—angular, black, and moving very, very fast. After the tsunami hit, 300,000 people died. In the ensuing chaos and destruction, one million jobs were lost in Indonesia and Sri Lanka alone.

Fewer casualties were experienced where mangrove forests remained, for example in Pichavaram and Muthupet in South India. Close to the epicenter of the tsunami, on Nias Island Indonesia, people were protected by mangroves. Burma and the Maldives suffered less damage because their mangroves and coral reefs remained largely intact.

Sitting in the bistro, you might think that a shrimp cocktail, world shrimp prices, friends on vacation, unemployment, the silence of animals, mangroves, tsunamis, and death and destruction in twelve different countries were all separate events. But we are part of one universal web. All these parts are intimately, exquisitely, and invisibly connected—they are one.

What I have described above is far from being a complete review of all the possible impacts and outcomes of nations hungry for shrimp, and we may never even know or make the connections necessary to identify them all. But we can become more aware of the notion of oneness and live our lives in a way that recognizes the sacred connections between everything and considers the im-

plications of all our actions on the whole. When we lead from this place in our hearts, it shows.

Making Oneness Practical

America West flight attendants' union vice-president Bill Lehman credits CEO Doug Parker for the survival of the airline during an extraordinarily difficult time for the industry. "Had Doug not been in power in September 2001, we wouldn't be here today," said Lehman, who has been with America West for 16 years.

Parker serves meals to workers at Thanksgiving and Christmas and works on the ramp as a baggage handler. "You just don't see that," Lehman said. "It is really pretty impressive." America West pilots' union chairman, J.R. Baker, is equally impressed. Parker took time out from a Phoenix golf tournament to intervene in a case involving Baker's son, who has lymphoma, by personally persuading the insurance company to allow Baker's son back in the hospital after a relapse. "He is a good guy," Baker said of Parker.

Parker sees himself as one with—not separate from—his colleagues at all levels. And when he negotiates with unions, he is treated the same way—as one—which is why the company goes from strength to strength. Its customers, vendors, employees, communities, and regulators are all one. In 2005, America West merged with USAirways to become the world's largest low-fare airline.

Wherever we are, whatever we do, think, or feel, we are connected through sacred pathways to each other and to all that is—the reality of oneness. When we grow our awareness of this reality, we grow our capacity for conscious leadership.

Turning Away from Separateness

According to the Conference Board, 40 percent of employees feel disconnected from their companies, and two out of three do not identify or feel motivated to support their employer's business objectives. Some 25 percent are "just showing up to collect a paycheck." In one mid-western university, a study showed that between 1988 and 2001, there was a dramatic increase in mental health problems reported by students. The numbers seeking help for depression doubled, and the number contemplating suicide tripled. The National Institute of Mental Health predicts that 13 percent of Americans (19 million) between the ages of 18 and 54 suffer from anxiety disorders and 9.5 percent from depressive disorders. The World Health Organization forecasts that by 2020, the share of "global disease burden" (the number of years of life lost to premature death or disability) will rise from 10.5 percent to 15 percent. The sadness and unhappiness of separation come with a heavy price.

In the past few years, we have become increasingly aware that separateness not only defies reality, it also brings about a sickness of the body—and worse, of the soul. Along with this, we have also become aware that the world is smaller, more interdependent, and integrated. As we will see, the desire for, and experience of, oneness is not new. However, there is today a new awareness being felt and heard across the world that calls us all to return to oneness. Community is

growing in importance, and privacy has become history. The new reality—novel for some, and everyday experience for others—is that we are one.

We are connected in ways we did not see before. Anheuser-Busch, which uses Missouri-grown rice to make beer, became anxious when it heard about the plans of Ventria Biosciences to plant fields in Missouri with transgenic rice containing human genes. The additional genes cause the plant to produce two proteins which Ventria intends to use to treat stomach disorders. Anheuser-Busch realized that the transgenic plants and seeds could migrate to the food crops and, eventually, might modify their beer. When the company announced that it would boycott Missouri rice if Ventria proceeded, the biotech company decided to plant the rice elsewhere. Everything in our lives is connected. We are one.

- If we bulldoze suppliers to provide more services and higher quality at lower prices and, by doing so, eventually drive them out of business, we will both lose, because suppliers and customers are one.
- If we have a rancorous exchange with our spouse, it isn't just the other party who is hurt. We are both hurt because our relationship—our oneness—is strained. This damages our partnership and therefore both of us, along with our children and friends, our work, and our health and well-being.¹
- If I throw my soda can out of my car window while driving, I may think that the litter I have thrown on the road is no longer part of my world after I have moved on, but I would be wrong. If millions of others do the same, rivers will become polluted and my drinking water will be at risk. The Earth is not an open system—it is a closed system.
- If I cheat or steal from my employees, customers, or suppliers, I may think that I can get away with it, but this is a misconception, as we have learned from the malfeasance and downfall of too many corporate leaders.
- When we inspire a child to do something extraordinary, we change the world, because we are one.

In these, and many other examples cited in this book, there are always causes and effects. (These are the terms we use in the West, but the process is known as *karma* in the East.) There are never actions without consequences—anywhere—because we are one.

The depth of our self-deception, caused by our belief in, and commitment to, separateness—isolating and disconnecting aspects of our lives—has become breathtaking. Consider what happened when Bernie Ebbers, the disgraced, then 63-year-old former CEO of WorldCom, was sentenced to 25 years in jail for orchestrating an \$11-billion accounting fraud, the biggest in the nation's history. His lawyers asked for leniency on the basis of their client's largesse and support of charitable causes! This suggests a bizarre mind-trick that stealing with one hand and supporting charities with the other represent separate activities, even when carried out by the same person! We continue in this illusion when we hurt others while believing that we are not hurting ourselves. The truth is quite otherwise. When we hurt a customer, we hurt ourselves, because the customer becomes an ex-customer—and because we share the same world.

The illusion is that we are separate: that the gum someone stuck under their seat in the movie theater would become part of another's world after they left; that my anger, when transferred to you, becomes your problem, not mine; that my department—or even company—is separate from yours; that if I crush a competitor, it affects them, but not me. The illusion is that we are separate from one another, separate from our actions, separate from other regions, cultures, religions, companies, and beliefs. When we act as if we were separate—for example, when we deliver shoddy service to customers, or exploit employees—that act of separateness creates a bigger wave of separateness.

People are feeling increasingly separate from business today, and this is counterproductive for the corporate world. In almost every field, we are being subjected to the powerful awakening that there is no separateness, only oneness. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

The air that I breathe is essential for my existence—to exist, I must breathe. Therefore, I am one with the air, for when the air ceases, so do I. In the same way, the water and I are also one. And the water *and* the air—*and you and I*—are all one, for we all exist interdependently. Therefore, we, and everything around us, are one.

The wave is not separate from the ocean; the oxygen in water is not separate from the hydrogen; the wave is not separate from the particle; I am not separate from you. In fact, nothing is separate from anything. We are one.

Transparency Reveals Our Oneness

Corporations, governments, health care, education, law enforcement, charities, associations, and religious groups are under more intense scrutiny than ever before, operating with the growing awareness that they will be held accountable for their actions—that everything they do may, sooner or later, become subject to investigation, audit, and media surveillance. Privacy is history. The Sarbanes-Oxley Act of the United States and the new European international capital standard, known as Basle II, are just two of many new initiatives that are changing the game, requiring stringent new levels of openness and fair practice in corporate governance. Although Sarbanes-Oxley is American law, it applies to any organization from any country doing business in the United States.

On a trip to England, I was surprised to see a headline declaring, "Elliott Spitzer shakes up UK Insurance Industry"—this in reference to the probe into insurance industry practices by New York State's Attorney General in his home state. Note that we are referring here to *one* elected government attorney from *one* U.S. state who has impacted the lives and businesses of thousands of people all over the world. This one man has effected lower mutual fund fees, changed the structure of Wall Street research, forced drug companies to open up their clinical trials to public scrutiny, and overhauled the relationship between insurance companies and brokers—worldwide.

Technology Makes Us One

Technology is just one of many forces teaching us the reality that we are all con-

nected, guiding us, sometimes reluctantly, into the glare of transparency and fairness. We are interconnected and inter-dependent in ways that seem more obvious than ever before. And technology is accentuating the transparency by helping to reveal and empower these connections as never before. We are one.²

In 1992, when underdog Korean presidential candidate Roh Moo Hyun's running mate, Chung Mong Joon, leader of the National Alliance 21 party, withdrew his support for Roh just seven hours before polls closed, things looked very bleak for the latter. Adding to his woes were the three leading newspapers, *Chosun Ilbo*, *Joong-ang Ilbo*, and *Dong-A Ilbo*, which were dismissing Roh as a dangerous leftist and declaring that he would be defeated. Early exit polls showed Roh trailing his opponent, Grand National Party leader Lee Hoi Chang, by a substantial margin.

Self-educated, Roh came from a poor family and in earlier years had been jailed for helping dissidents fight the military regimes of the past. In 1981, Roh defended a student who was arrested on trumped-up charges of anti-state activities, and much of his subsequent work had been as a human rights lawyer defending pro-democracy and labor-rights activists. This endeared him to students and young voters. Admiring his courage, integrity, and reputation as an independent outsider, they formed an Internet fan club to promote his future. In time, this band of supporters grew to 70,000 members and helped launch what has been called the Roh typhoon. The Internet enabled Roh to liberate himself from "black money"—corporate donations that are South Korea's traditional form of campaign financing. Largely through Internet-based campaign groups, Roh raised the equivalent of about \$1 billion from more than 180,000 individual donors.

Thus it was that news of Roh's impending electoral defeat quickly circulated among young voters via Internet bulletin boards and cell phones operated by digitally savvy student supporters. One Internet site recorded three million hits from around midnight to about 3 a.m. on Election Day—some five to six times the average. Hundreds of thousands of Roh's young supporters made millions of cell phone calls, and 800,000 text messages flashed to the cell phones of their friends, urging them to go to the polls and vote for Roh.

By 2 p.m., another exit poll showed that Roh was leading Lee by 2 to 3 percent, and shortly after the polls closed, Roh was declared the winner.

Technology has become a remarkable gift, beyond others that we take so much for granted. It is a tool that, for the first time in history, has the power to wire the souls of the universe together—for good. The funeral of Princess Diana marked the first time in history when one story was shared with one billion people around the world simultaneously—on CNN. Technology has raised the level of consciousness in the world by helping us to see how much we have in common, and causing us to understand that we are connected as one.

*I am only one, but
still I am one. I
cannot do
everything, but I
still can do
something. I will
not refuse to do the
something I can do.*

— Helen Keller

Technology also offers the means to examine, endorse, or challenge the thoughts and actions of anyone on earth. A new age of relationships will flow from this—among members of society and between societies—based on the realization that we are all connected, that we are all part of one universal system.

Corporate leaders, government officials, church leaders, athletes, entertainers, even moms and dads, all are available for scrutiny. We have lost our separate, untouchable status. We have come to realize that we are all one and more similar to, than different from, one another. We are human, vulnerable, susceptible, brilliant, curious, and magnificent. We are capable of greatness and of making mistakes. We have learned that our idols who were portrayed in books and movies as charismatic leader prototypes are not, after all, immune to questioning, as issues pertaining to their business and personal ethics are openly discussed and disseminated more quickly and widely than ever before in the electronic, digital, and printed media. Not a single digit, or document, with our name on it is exempt from examination.

Since being formed in 2001, the phenomenal, self-organizing, Web-based free encyclopedia, [Wikipedia](#), has become much larger than all existing encyclopedias, most of which were assembled and developed over far longer periods. It is a portent of how the Web attracts and embraces oneness—over half a million contributors offer articles and self-regulate the system, acting as one, and the average time it takes to detect, remove, or repair deliberate attempts to sabotage Wikipedia's trust and integrity is 1.7 seconds!

Whatever we create, we create not just for our (imagined) separate selves, but for us all, because, of course, we are one, and technology helps to smooth the path to oneness.

The Emergence of the Conscious Leader

Why is there an emerging interest in conscious leadership? One of the reasons is that our expectations of leaders and leadership are changing as we become more aware of the shortcomings of separateness thinking and the imperative of oneness.

In the past, we have made organizational leaders our icons. We have separated them from us by putting them on pedestals, worshiping their personalities, and singing their praises as if they were heroic saviors. Countless leadership theories have passed like meteorites in the night sky of history, and now we are reassessing many of them, along with our opinions of corporate leaders, some of whom made their fame and were exalted for practices like firing the lowest-performing 10 percent of their sales teams each year. We yearn for something more than this—something more honoring of our oneness.

The people we fire are also our customers, our friends, and members of our communities. To celebrate a company that "succeeds" by firing people might seem okay to some when it is happening in other companies, but it feels different when it is your company doing the firing, and you are the one being fired. Companies that "succeed" by one set of measures, but fail by another, or "succeed" at the expense of another, are practicing an obsolete concept: separateness. Today, consumers want to wear sneakers that are stylish and inexpensive,

and they want the employees who make them to be fairly compensated for their work. These are signals that a new maturity is emerging, based on greater consciousness. We are realizing that we should help and support those who are confused, disadvantaged, or underperforming, instead of yelling at them or firing them—or demanding, rather than inspiring, higher performance. This represents a priceless strategic opportunity for those who are conscious, and a wake-up call for those who are not.

Countless organizations from Nike to McDonald's to Starbucks have transformed their policies in response to this new awareness. Starbucks, for example, through its supply chain member, Mississippi River Corporation, received first-ever approval from the Food and Drug Administration to incorporate 10 percent post-consumer fiber into its hot-beverage paper cups. The new cups reduce the company's use of tree fiber by more than five million pounds annually.

That is not to say that this shift in consciousness is going to be perfectly smooth or lead to immediate and successful transformation. We've been drawing our models of leadership from history, casting leadership in terms of heroes and miracle workers. In doing so, we have created a "cult of the personality." This can be seen everywhere, in the world of business, in sports, in entertainment. The relationship we have with those magnified personalities is based on dependency, power, and separateness. We have created our modern form of serfs and peasants. We should remind ourselves that history is full of examples of people who "buckled under" these types of leaders. Think of Genghis Khan, Mussolini, or Hitler, or any despotic, pathological leader. The human condition is malleable and vulnerable to the urgings of a Pol Pot, an Idi Amin, a Mao Tse-tung, or a Stalin. The direction humans take can easily be swayed by potent leaders if the relationship with their followers is rooted in separateness—the mistaken belief that the consequences of my actions are separate from me and are not now, and will not become, my problem. Like all radical changes, the move away from this thinking to models of conscious leadership based on oneness will be challenging.

In her research, Bernice Kanner, author of [Are You Normal About Money?](#) (Bloomberg Press, 2001), found that for \$10 million, 25 percent of those surveyed would abandon all their friends and church or become a prostitute for a week, or change their race or sex. And 7 percent (this seems so incredible—one out of every 14 of us) would commit murder for this amount. But the margins between corruption and virtue are narrow. Most people surveyed said they would do these things for as little as \$3 million, but definitely not for \$2 million. Go figure! In our rational, material times, it seems we have our principles—attached to a certain price. This may also suggest something else, however: that although we inherently understand the principle of oneness, at the mundane levels we are prepared to act separately, until the going gets dangerous, when we instinctively resort to oneness again, because deep in our hearts, we *know* we need one another.

Throughout history, there have been numerous opportunities for leaders, through their personality and their demagoguery, to create armies of followers who would do all kinds of reprehensible things at their urging. This has been the dynamic of the ego-driven leadership style during the past thousand years.

But it worked better (if "better" is an appropriate word here) in an era before our networks were democratized.

We are learning that the fear-based, egocentric leadership model—the leader as hero or charismatic personality—is ineffective. The results it produces are not consistent. As our societies move from a worldview based on separateness to one based on oneness, achieving results by fear-based measures is bound to be temporary. Parents who bribe and punish their children to achieve results; spouses who withhold emotional gifts from each other to control their relationship; politicians who make promises to secure votes; priests who guarantee salvation in exchange for doctrinal adherence; or companies that over-promise to make a sale—all rely on fear-based manipulations that will prove to be transitory and uninspiring because they are rooted in the illusion of separateness. They are trying to control and win, instead of connecting and cooperating, which creates oneness.

Today, we are tired of the "rational" ten-point plan for leadership that purports to provide a guaranteed outcome. Our ways of thinking in the post-9/11 era are very different. We are engaging leaders and programs in a much higher level of questioning. Today, we're looking at each other and asking, "Who are you really? What do you stand for and what values do you represent? What are the deeper and wider implications of your behavior? In what way have my actions contributed to your behavior? Are you more connected to the whole than to your ego?" We are looking for conscious leaders and teachers who are not merely doing what they can get away with, but who are loving and respectful of others and have a deep commitment to values and to living an inspiring life that is sensitive to everything and everyone. We're asking questions that attempt to move us towards a deeper sense of oneness. And the inspiring bonus that flows to us all from this new thinking is the growing awareness of the good in people and their potential to contribute to greater oneness.

Footnotes:

1. A study published in the December 2005 *Archives of General Psychiatry* suggested that spouses engaged in hostile relationships have consistently elevated stress levels that significantly impede their bodies' wound-healing capacity and raise blood levels of pro-inflammatory cytokines, which have been linked to a higher risk of developing depression, heart disease, osteoporosis, arthritis, type 2 diabetes, cancer, and general physical decline.
2. Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA) is an example of the growing oneness in software, which, even when they are written in different languages and have different purposes, can work together for a common goal.

About the author: Academy Fellow **Lance Secretan**, PhD, is one of the world's foremost leadership experts and a renowned pioneer in innovative methods of inspiring people and organizations. The former CEO of a global corporation and an acclaimed business school professor, Secretan works with a gifted worldwide faculty, changing the lives of people, transforming companies, and revolutionizing the way we think about leadership.

TRANSFORMATION

He is the best-selling author of 13 internationally published books on leadership, an award-winning columnist, philosopher, corporate coach, and one of North America's most sought-after keynote speakers, retreat leaders, and business advisors. Voted one of the nation's top ten speakers, and one of the "top 21 speakers for the 21st century" (*Successful Meetings magazine*), he addresses audiences around the world.

Lance and his wife, Tricia, and their wonder dog, Spirit, divide their time between a home on the edge of a wilderness area in Ontario and a Rocky Mountain retreat in Colorado.

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Transformation Copyright World Business Academy

428 Bryant Circle, Suite 109, Ojai, CA 93023

Academy Phone 805 640-3713 Fax 805 640-9914 Website www.worldbusiness.org

Senior Editor, David Zweig, david@worldbusiness.org Phone 510 547-3223