

Definition of Leadership

When the century turned, when the millennium turned—no great surprise, I suppose—I was frequently asked, “Will you lecture us on 21st century leadership?” Implicit was the virtual organization, the Internet, and so on. I need the money, I said, “Sure.” But what I *did* do when I would walk into the room, is I would say to them every time, “I’m here. I’m a charlatan.” Because the reality is, leadership in the 21st century *A.D.* is exactly what it was in the 21st century *B.C.* Leadership is about the development, the inducement of people to grow, to go way beyond where they believe they could go. Nothing has changed. I’m going to write a book soon that’s called, *Nothing Has Changed*.

Of course, the world is very different in the age of the Internet. But they thought the same darn thing when the cars came along. They thought the same darn thing when the trains came along. They thought the same darn thing when the canals came along. But the leadership thing, it’s ...

Robert Greenleaf, 25 years ago, wrote a magnificent book called *Servant Leadership*. I just passed it by. I picked it up about a year or two ago, and I said, “Wow, this is it!” The essence of the leader is to induce people to grow. When you look at a football team—a coach and a quarterback—when you look at a ballet company—the choreographer and the dancer—the magic is when the dancer or the quarterback is shocked by how much they have grown as we worked together. And I, the leader, am shocked at how much they have grown.

Robert Altman won the lifetime achievement Oscar about three or four years ago, and died immediately thereafter, alas. But Mr. Altman said—and I actually wrote this down in pencil while he was doing his acceptance speech—he said, “The role of the director is to provide a *space* where people can become—where actors and actresses can become—more than they ever dreamed of being.” Now, you say “Hollywood,” I say “Everybody.” The same thing exactly is true with a housekeeper in a hotel, with a junior accountant in

the finance department. And so, I once said that leadership is about painting portraits of excellence. Napoleon said it better than me, no surprise. He said, “A leader is a dealer in hope.”

On my wall in my writing room at home, are two, and only two, pictures. Winston Churchill, 1940, as the Battle of Britain began. Franklin Roosevelt, 1933, in the midst of the Depression. Why are they there? Roosevelt was a lousy economist, as have been almost all of our presidents. Churchill was no great military strategist, most would agree. But what did they do? In 1933 in the United States and 1940 in Britain, Mr. Roosevelt, Mr. Churchill made people believe that the sun would come up the next morning. It’s what Rudy Giuliani did for 18 hours on 9/11, and changed the perception of millions of people and the perception of him. That’s what *it* is all about.