
A New Social Contract for The New Millennium

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Abstract

This article suggests, through the use of premises, that these times dictate the need for a new social contract between employer and employee. The origins of this contract originate in the organization development research of the 1980s, and suggest that public organizations can support the cause of democracy within and through administration. Premises include the following: Trust in public institutions and their leaders is perhaps at an all-time low. Organizations and their leaders need to rebuild trust in their institutions and among their employees. Our administrative systems are harmed, in part, because most people do not understand the difference between elected and appointed public servants, and the rules that govern their selection and oversight; the result is a perception of blurred lines between elected and appointed officials. Healthy organizations are possible. The focus in leadership literature on ethics, spirituality and personal characteristics, combined with principles which have been reinforced by the quality movement, suggest a positive future for healthy workplaces. A new social contract can help to fix the system. Developing and maintaining healthy workplaces offers a laboratory in which to practice true participatory democracy. This article suggests, through the use of premises, that these times dictate the need for a new social contract between employer and employee. The origins of this contract originate in the organization development research of the 1980s, and suggest that public organizations can support the cause of democracy within and through administration. Premises include the following: Trust in public institutions and their leaders is perhaps at an all-time low. Organizations and their leaders need to rebuild trust in their institutions and among their employees. Our administrative systems are harmed, in part, because most people do not understand the difference between elected and appointed public servants, and the rules that govern their selection and oversight; the result is a perception of blurred lines between elected and appointed officials. Healthy organizations are possible. The focus in leadership literature on ethics, spirituality and personal characteristics, combined with

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principles which have been reinforced by the quality movement, suggest a positive future for healthy workplaces. A new social contract can help to fix the system. Developing and maintaining healthy workplaces offers a laboratory in which to practice true participatory democracy.

PREMISE: Trust in public institutions and their leaders is perhaps at an all-time low.

Today, the public does not trust public administrators; many believe they are incompetent and incapable of providing services in an effective, efficient and responsive manner. The resulting environment encourages public servants either to act "without sympathy or enthusiasm" as Victor Thompson (1975) described the consequences of a rigid and impersonal bureaucracy resulting from public fear that administrators would "steal the sovereignty." Thus, public administrators may fulfill public perceptions by doing no more - and no less - than absolutely necessary. According to Argyris and Golembiewski, treating employees as children results in behavior at the same level.(1) Alternatively, developing an environment in which employees are given responsibility, authority, feedback, specific and doable expectations results in what is today called empowerment.(2)

PREMISE: Organizations and their leaders need to rebuild trust in their institutions and among their employees.

Burnout consists of three components. The first is depersonalization or a tendency to treat persons as objects. Depersonalization is viewed as "detached concern" - a coping mechanism used by many helping professionals. In its extreme, employees view their clients, patients or customers as nuisances, objectifying them as their disease, category, or simply as the enemy. The second variable included in this construct is a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. While personal involvement was originally perceived by Maslach to be a component of burnout, research has indicated that burned-out persons may retain a high sense of personal involvement in their work: they just do not think their involvement means anything. These two components, depersonalization and reduced sense of personal accomplishment, are accompanied by the most virulent and universally understood component: emotional exhaustion. This is reflected in the feeling, "I'm all wrung out with nothing left to give." Golembiewski's work suggests that burnout may serve as a measure of organizational climate and that "low burnouts" differ from "high burnouts" on every personal and behavioral measure addressed. Research in burnout

literature reflects the level of malaise and disconnection among public employees, most often at higher levels than in the private sectors.(3)

While the private sector has some experiences from which public administrators could benefit, they also have their own issues. Most importantly, corporations implement an incentive system, which rewards short-term financial gains to top executives who often leave behind an organization which has lost its best people, its institutional memory, and its motivation to produce and succeed.(4) These executives/leaders are rewarded for making radical and drastic decisions with no shared risks to themselves.

Corporations also have little external oversight of their actions with few checks and balances against their decisions, particularly in the short term. Secrecy, arbitrary decision-making, fears and hierarchical authority may reflect corporate culture.

Most importantly, the values of corporations are focused on satisfying the needs and expectations of the shareholders. The public good, which is the foundation of the public service, is not a value overtly expressed by private corporations.

PREMISE: Our administrative systems are harmed, in part, because most people do not understand the difference between elected and appointed public servants and the rules that govern their selection and oversight; the result is a perception of blurred lines between elected and appointed officials.

In recent years there have been frequent examples of visible and powerful political individuals who have violated the public's trust, "stolen the people's sovereignty," and created incidents of public embarrassment and concern. The power of these officials, with insufficient application of checks and balances, has resulted in a reluctance by many to compete for office. Incidents of public embarrassment and concern extend even up to the President of the United States. When his sexual peccadilloes become the subject not only of daily conversation but a major outlay of federal funds for a special investigator and the President's defense, much is wrong.(5)

While not primarily the subject of this paper, such problems make it apparent that the electoral process needs to be revamped. When money, physical attractiveness, charisma on television, and the willingness to participate in negative campaigns determine success at the polls, much is wrong. The academic discussions of politics and administration initiated by

Wilson's 1912 essay to this day have not engaged most of our citizenry. But the general public paints all public officials with the same brush, and career civil servants are harmed by these actions.

The creation of a "rule by the minority," as reflected in California's lawmaking by proposition process, has resulted in a parallel influence procedure which often results in unconstitutional, discriminatory and punitive policies with the effect of law. These also undermine public confidence in the constitutionally created legislative and electoral processes at the state and eventually the federal level. "As California goes, so will the rest of the nation within ten years" is a popular saying that reflects the influence their policies have in modeling those of the nation.

PREMISE: The system can be fixed.

It is time to "reinvent" - to use Osborne's and Gaebler's term - a motivated, energetic and committed leadership as well as a productive and empowered workforce. My concern is that we have viewed the term "entrepreneurial" not as Osborne and Gaebler defined it - to describe using resources in new ways that maximize productivity and effectiveness - but rather in business and corporate terms reflected in major takeovers, downsizings, re-engineerings, and ultimately pain for thousands of employees. In examining the Osborne and Gaebler book Reinventing Government, I agreed with the major premise to create a mission-focused, results-oriented, customer-focused government. (*Osborne and Gaebler, 1993*) However, the emphasis on competition seems to overshadow these foci. They only devote three of over 400 pages to one of the largest areas of our economy, the health care crisis, one that has grown exponentially in costs over the past few decades. Their vision was that (in health care) government should assume a policy, or a " 'steering' role,...perhaps creating a mechanism for negotiating limits on health care costs, requiring that all Americans have health insurance, and providing funding at least for the unemployed and the poor." (*Osborne and Gaebler, 1993, pp. 312-314*) I was concerned to note that they suggest an entrepreneurial system that would "leave the practice of medicine in private hands...encourage competition, particularly through prepaid plans, which allow consumers to shop for the best price, create strong incentives for prevention and healthy lifestyles." (*Osborne and Gaebler, 1993, pp. 312-314*).

Many health policy analysts are suggesting that the private hands providing health care today are the insurance companies and administrators, not the health care professionals - that cost savings and profit drive medical

decisions and actions. The government has not assumed the policy role envisioned by Osborne and Gaebler, again largely because of the divisiveness among the elected partisan leaders in the White House and Congress. Our policymakers are unwilling to commit to a national health care ethic that mandates health care as a right, not a privilege. The present debate centering around granting immunity from litigation to managed care providers should grow. In Congress and the White House, proposals are emerging for a "patient's bill of rights." Unfortunately, these actions imply ex post facto and punitive actions rather than proactive and preventive programs. This strategy has exemplified the welfare reform movement for the last decade. However, the reinvention movement has also incorporated, or resulted in, the establishment of a focus on quality, customers, strategy and employees which could bode well for public administration.

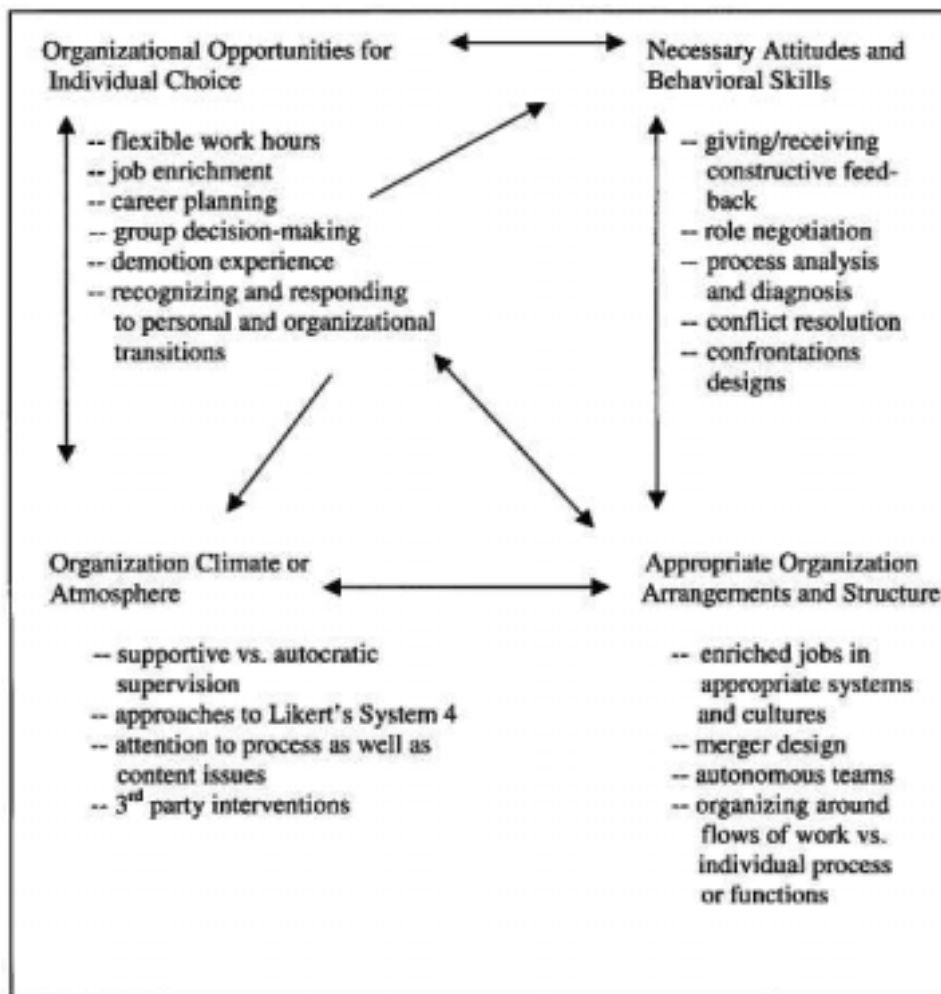
PREMISE: Healthy organizations are possible.

In my opinion, the many contributions to leadership and organizations by organization development (OD) practitioners and scholars formed a foundation for both the reinvention movement in the federal government and the quality initiatives which emerged in the public, private and nonprofit sectors.

Much of the organization development literature of the last three-plus decades has distinguished among types of organizations, leadership, and their effects on the people who work in them. Since the pre-World War II studies of Lewin, Lippett and White (1939) explored styles of supervision and their effects on the people being supervised, scholars have attempted to refine what these organizations look like and their effects on people and productivity. The writings of Argyris, Likert and Golembiewski in the 60s, 70s and 80s confirm the belief that a) we can distinguish between a positive and creative - or healthy - environment and a negative and autocratic - or toxic - environment, and b) it is possible to change those environments through leadership, changes in climate or culture and other types of organizational interventions. For example, one way to distinguish organizational climate is between degenerative (unhealthy) organizations and regenerative (healthy) ones on four dimensions: openness, trust, risk-to experiment, and owning – using high and low as the measures (Golembiewski, 1993, p.48). Regenerative organizations are those which result in positive individual and organizational outcomes. Likert's four systems of management (leadership) are identified as exploitative-authoritative, benevolent-authoritative, consultative, and participative group, with the latter the most desirable for performance and job

satisfaction (*Likert, 1967*). Golembiewski's 1981 article suggested OD designs that could influence individual choice, necessary attitudes and behavioral skills, organization climate/atmosphere and organization arrangements and structures. Golembiewski's organizational climates also noted the distinction between defensive and supportive climates.

Figure 1:
Arraying OD Designs By Four Major Classes of Attitudinal and Behavioral Supports



Source: Golembiewski, Robert T. (1981). The ideational poverty of two modes of coupling democracy and administration. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 3,1 January: 1-65.

**Figure 2:
Organizational Climates**

Defensive Climates tend to be induced by, and to produce	Supportive Climates tend to be induced by, and to produce
• Evaluation	• Description
• Control	• Problem-orientation
• Strategy	• Spontaneity
• Neutrality	• Empathy
• Certitude	• Provisionalism

Source: Golembiewski, Robert T. (1981). The ideational poverty of two modes of coupling democracy and administration. International Journal of Public Administration, 3, 1 January: 1-65.

Golembiewski's article outlined and reiterated the first two theories of democracy vs. administration and democracy or administration, and suggested an alternative: democracy within and through administration. Although outlined in a preceding book chapter published elsewhere, this article "essentially proposes that only a certain quality of administration can generate the attitudes and behaviors that we value in the kind of representative democracy in which we live." (*Golembiewski, 1981, p.424*) In this model, "direction must come from specific values which ...constitute the compass by which organizational designers can steer" (*Golembiewski, 1981, p. 425*) and criteria upon which organizations fall on a continuum from dehumanization-democratization. According to Golembiewski, criteria include the following:

- participation by all organization members in decision-making, either directly or through representatives;
- frequent feedback of the results of organizational performance ... including rewards keyed to performance;

- sharing of both management-level information and expertise throughout the organization;
- guarantees of individual rights, which correspond essentially to the basic political liberties that are so commonly unavailable to individuals in both public and business organizations;
- the availability of appeal or recourse in cases of intractable disputes, decision-units for which will at least in part be composed of peers; and
- a set of supporting attitudes or values, a "democratic consciousness" for whose enactment sufficient behavioral skills exist throughout the organization (*Golembiewski, 1981, pp. 425-6*)

Golembiewski suggests that these can also be explored through the patterns of control held by employees and the "complex of attitudes/values/skills associated with enacting a democratic consciousness." (*Golembiewski, 1981, pp. 426*) This article also distinguishes the distinction in defensive and supportive organizational climates and the implications of a bureaucratic structure vs. one that emphasizes job enrichment.

The Future of an Ethical PA- Democracy Within and Through Administration:

What's in the Future?

PREMISE: The focus in leadership literature on ethics, spirituality and personal characteristics, combined with principles which have been reinforced by the quality movement, suggest a positive future for healthy workplaces.

Recent publications on leadership have discussed topics which would have been taboo in a Weberian bureaucracy or Taylorian organization. Love and spirituality are now encouraged as desirable characteristics for the leaders of today and tomorrow.⁶ Kouzes and Posner, in their 1993 book *Credibility*, describe the "Spirited Individual, who makes people feel worthy" and suggest that liking our supervisor is important. They quote Federman: "I contend, however, that all other things being equal, we will work harder and more effectively for people we like. And we

will like them in direct proportion to how they make us feel." (*Kouzes and Posner, p.30*) While this type of behavior may seem to blur the authority lines between supervisor and subordinate and thus provide confusion to those attempting to avoid litigation from their subordinates (e.g., fear of sexual harassment or other types of discrimination), I believe it is possible to have compassion and yet to have a toxin-free workplace.

Zemke's 1998 article describes processes of learning and unlearning as a way to teach adults through the use of technology and structure. Integration of Kolb's learning style model enhances personal and organizational effectiveness. (*Zemke, 1998*) Kolb's steps include elaboration, organization, concept mapping or webbing, and elaborative interrogation.

As previously discussed, Golembiewski's premise of 1981, which I believe holds true today, is that through a democratic workplace we can develop citizens who are mature, self-actualized, productive, and involved in their external society. As we "conspire" -- i.e., breathe-- together, management and employees can create this healthy, democratic workplace and contribute to the creation of our ideal democratic society.

PREMISE: A new social contract can help to fix the system: developing and maintaining healthy workplaces offers a laboratory in which to practice true participatory democracy.

One of the myths of the 19th and 20th centuries was that employers and employees had an unspoken but binding obligation to each other. If we perform well, do our best, and are loyal to the organization, the organization will take care of us for life. In our new economic world, both employers and employees have become disillusioned with this relationship. We could notice in society that those contracts have also been violated. Marriage, parenting, education, military recruiting commitments, and Social Security are institutions that have not necessarily withstood the tests of time and life. If, in fact, these contracts - real and mythical - can not work, what is the new agreement that might underpin a healthy workplace and also create democracy from within organizational structures? There are specific characteristics that can serve as assumptions for or foundations of a healthy workplace.

First, there is a major assumption that both the individual and the organization have explicit responsibilities to each other and hence to a successful relationship. The organization has a responsibility to provide a

safe workplace, the tools and structure in which to perform tasks, and clarity of policies and procedures to ensure success. The individual has a responsibility to provide services as agreed upon with the employer, to ask questions when tasks are not clear, and to provide feedback to the employer when concerns arise.

The multi-dimensional view of work and life is a perception that there is sufficient room for all of us to succeed without causing harm to someone else. The traditional two-dimensional competitive model assumes that there will always be a loser if there is a winner: there must be a diminishing of what power or resources I have if you obtain more.⁷ Managers should be committed and feel responsibility to create a culture that includes respect for the dignity of every person as well as a commitment to the organization's goals.

Effective supervisors trained in the skills of supervision are essential foundations. Don't forget, everyone has a boss! What is a boss? A mentor, supervisor, leader, general director, conductor, vision-er, coach.

We all perceive ourselves as instruments of change. This concept implies a commitment to expanding our self-knowledge, ongoing lifelong learning, and accepting responsibility to participate fully in the application of our gifts and skills to improve the space around us. Giving of our time and talents both at work and in our communities makes the space around us better.

A belief that work can help meet our spiritual needs is also important. According to Tom Morris (1994) all of us have four spiritual needs:

1. A sense of uniqueness: to feel important and special;
2. Union with something greater than ourselves: we are part of a bigger world;
3. A sense of usefulness: consequently, unemployment is a spiritual problem; and
4. A deep sense of understanding of where we are going, where we are, the big picture.

As individuals we need to integrate the parts of who we are. Why do we separate what we do at work and that person from the person we are outside of work? Let's face it; if we have too much fun at work, some of us feel guilty: you mean they pay us to do something we love? In an era of cutback management, how do we continue the enthusiasm when we are concerned that what we do won't continue? We persist in part by staying refreshed and renewed. Also, we do it by pursuing the activities which keep us current and learning in our fields and by staying in touch with those who do what we do: our peers and our support network.

One of the most important guiding principles for a healthy workplace is that embodied in the Golden Rule. Every religion has a variation; "Treat others as you would like to be treated." The Dalai Lama, upon being asked how to achieve world peace, said, "Be nice." Other principles include trust and respect for others, and acknowledgement of the personal worth and dignity of all. Additional principles include a commitment to communication, the avoidance of secrecy, elimination of fear, and an acceptance of change as inevitable.

An article in a 1995 California newspaper suggested that management needs to develop new metaphors for the workplace. Rather than sports and military metaphors, which frequently reflect hierarchy, domination and control, leaders should focus on other metaphors, which emphasize inclusion, compassion and relationships. Works by several authors would suggest learning new metaphors for perceiving work:

- Tend a garden instead of running a machine.
- Maintain a web instead of a traditional hierarchical chain of command or career ladder.
- Provide a hearth or communal hub instead of a sterile, rigid environment.
- Weave it instead of hammering it out.
- Bring your whole self to work instead of being all business at business;
- Integrate our values, personal interests, experiences, emotions and spirit with work.
- Lead ecologically instead of militarily; i.e., carefully consider how decisions relate to many spheres: our

personal lives, society as a whole, and the environment.

In summary, this perspective "views business as a continuous process of building and expanding relationships (with colleagues, customers, the world) instead of as a big game that has to end. Winning seems pointless when we establish enduring, long-term relationships" (*San Jose Mercury Herald*, 6/13/95).

Redefining our Perspectives

Tom Morris (*personal communication, September 1994*), philosopher and author, describes a model which is redefining excellence from what he describes as the competitive model of the West to a new model. Competitive models emphasize zero-sum, win/lose principles (e.g., We're number one, but not organizationally or personally; the price is too high). He distinguishes this from the "comparative model of the East," which focuses solely on self, compared over time: "I don't compete, except with myself." The danger is what Morris calls the "self-defeat of self-centeredness." The model he proposes is the "collaborative model of the Mid-West," which focuses on interactivity and community, using all our talents, teams, and resulting in a deep transformation in relationships. Collaborative models emphasize partnerships; encouragement of community, interpersonal relationships; and the power of shared vision, mutually developed. Morris's general formula for human good is "people in partnership for a worthy purpose." He defines purpose as being rooted in self-knowledge and a vision of what is good: partners are fair and active; they share commitment (from the heart). The underlying assumption is that people are ethical, mutually supportive and open to learning.

Obstacles to collaborative models, according to Morris, include thinking that is short-term, bottom-line, self-centered and adversarial. Healthy competition can happen when everyone gets better: the outcome should be quality. Much of the quality movement (CQI/TQM,TQL, etc.) focuses on principles which reflect this perspective, but frequently come out with few outcomes.(8) More recently, the quality movement has accompanied a strategic emphasis which implies a necessity: first, to define the values which govern an organization. Second, the leaders develop vision and mission statements. The statement will drive everything in the organization and serves as the foundation for an organizational strategic

plan. Top leaders write their personal individual performance plans around the quality initiatives; they include how they will help to implement the strategic plan. Measurable criteria are attached to their goals. Ideally, this process moves throughout the organization, accompanied by skills training that empowers managers and supervisors to implement a culture based on quality. Evaluation of performance is based on outcomes, improving processes, and constant assessment of goals and priorities.

So What is the New Social Contract?

The preceding description outlines a new social contract. The employer and the employee have obligations to each other and to the organization. The employer is obliged to provide a framework in which the employee will work. This framework is based on explicit values, goals, and a mission-oriented structure; it provides a picture of the entire system and where in that system the employee fits. Specific measurable criteria, as well as expected measures of success, will be negotiated with the employee. Regular, frequent and explicit feedback is provided to the employee. To paraphrase F. W. Taylor, structure, tools, training, feedback and supervision will be provided by the organization.

Employees will be expected to commit to a fair day's work, to ask questions when they don't understand, to seek to "own" their job and the organization's mission, to bring their entire person to the job, including initiative, energy, enthusiasm, curiosity, objectivity, and a desire to improve themselves and the organization's processes. This contract should be renegotiated regularly and frequently.

How does this vision differ from the typical workplace of today, particularly in the public sector? In the early 1980s, Robert Golembiewski wrote a series of articles about the tension between democracy and administration. (*Golembiewski, 1981; see also Golembiewski, 1985*) The titles of his three papers changed only one word: versus, and, and finally, through. His premise, which holds true today, is that through a democratic workplace we can develop citizens who are mature, self-actualized, productive, and involved in their external society. As we "conspire" -- i.e., breathe-- together, management can create this healthy, democratic workplace and contribute to the creation of this ideal democratic society (*Ferguson, 1980*). This social contract will create and nurture public servants who are accountable, empowered and allowed to realize their full

capacities. They will work in an environment free of toxins, the worst of which is fear. And democracy will thrive.

Notes

1. See, for example, Chris Argyris (1970). *Intervention Theory and Method*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley. And Robert T. Golembiewski (1981). The ideational poverty of two modes of coupling democracy and administration. International Journal of Public Administration, 3, 1 January: 1-65. Robert T. Golembiewski (1981). *Toward democracy within and through administration: A primer to inspire and guide OD applications* (1982). In Joseph A., Uveges, Ed. Public Administration History and theory in contemporary perspective. New York: Marcel Dekker, Inc. pp. 55-84, V.I, Annals of Public Administration.
2. The evolution of the discussion on empowerment, which has been a value of the OD effort and which is seen in the service and quality movement in this nation, has led to recent questions as to whether we in fact empower employees or simply give lip service to the words. See, for example, Argyris, 1998. A recent computer search of journals and dissertations resulted in over 50 instruments to measure job satisfaction and organizational culture/climate in the last four years.
3. See, for example, Golembiewski (1985, 1988, 1992, 1996, and 1998); Mirvis et al. (1997, 1998); Kilpatrick, et al. (1991, 1992).
4. See, for example, stories about the Sunbeam CEO, called Chainsaw Al by his peers and the press. His termination followed the application of severe methods, which the corporation's leadership felt did not accomplish expected goals.
5. To me, the saddest thing about this latest incident is that the entire Presidential Internship program has possibly been harmed by the way this intern was selected, as well as her apparent performance while working in that role.
6. Look at the titles! Conger et al., *Spirit at work: Discovering the spirituality in leadership*; Marcic, *Managing with the wisdom of love: uncovering virtue in people and organizations*; Pulley, *Losing*

your job: reclaiming your soul; and Bryson and Crosby, *Leadership for the common good*. Kouzes and Posner, *Credibility: How leaders gain and lose it, why people demand it*.

7. Kaleel Jamison, *The Nibble Theory*, outlines this well.
8. An example of focusing on the wrong issues was a military TQL group addressing parking. After months of discussion, the group announced to the leadership that there were more cars than parking spaces! A solution as to permit students/employees to wear tennis shoes (non-regulation) so that they could walk farther. While this solution might help temporarily, it did not solve the fact that there were three times as many cars as parking spaces, and parking was not considered when new buildings were constructed.

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