

Hello, this is Wayne Rivers at The Family Business Institute. Thank you for tuning in. Please click on our social media icons and please give us the benefit of your thinking in the comments below.

This week I want to talk about leadership that dares not speak its name. This comes from a Harvard Business Review article from April of 2018 and I think you'll be able to identify with this. I think you'll be able to see yourself and maybe develop a new perspective for your own style of leadership. The article talks about a really gifted woman named Vivian Ming and she's an entrepreneur, a CEO, an IT visionary. Those are all leadership roles, visionary teacher, CEO. But she doesn't see herself as a leader. She says in this article she sees herself as a data scientist and a computer nerd, quotes. That's her words from the article. She said she focuses more on problems than people, which is very anti-CEO and anti-leadership kind of behavior. She says that the best way for her to contribute in her organization and in her roles is to keep honing her individual skills. Then, and this is key, recruit others who buy into and support her vision, very leadership, very CEO.

So how do you see yourself? How do you think of yourself and your role? For example, for me, I think of myself as a sales guy. That's how I started and that's how I still see myself. It's maybe 10% of what I do but that's still how I see myself. I guess I'm a reluctant leader and I bet many of you... I identified with this article and I bet many of you do too.

We didn't start off in life as we came up in our careers, thinking of ourselves as leaders or chief executives. That developed and happened over time and the business started small and it grew, and your role had to expand and grow. So, you've gravitated maybe even against your own will at times into roles of leadership. This is very situational leadership I think that Ms. Ming talks about.

The article, the HBR article talks about, it coins the term, "anti-D leadership leaders" and they have four characteristics.

The first is that they don't have any expectation that people are going to follow them because of some kind of personal charisma. They get people excited about their vision and the chance to make an impact by subscribing to that vision. So, it's a different... When I was a younger man, if somebody said, "Who's a great leader?" I would think of Lee Iacocca, he was always in the commercials and he was on the cover of magazines as a great leader. But my perception is that he was a very charismatic individual. I think that when I think about our clients over my 30 years in family business consulting, I think most are these anti-leadership leaders that evolved into leadership rather than being charismatic people. They found people that could subscribe to their vision.

The second characteristic is that they stepped into leadership reluctantly and as necessary and they can step out of leadership again as necessary. It's a very situational leadership. They're willing to defer to other people in leadership decisions when those people are more capable, have better ideas, et cetera, et cetera. So that's a very important aspect.

Their leadership is intermittent. As I say, they can step aside when necessary.

Finally, they don't assume that their teams are permanent. Because it is situation leadership, they think that these people are going to form this team for this purpose. Once that purpose or that problem is solved, then a new team arises and that gets put into place to attack another problem. They recognize these anti-leadership leaders. They recognize that to solve problems in a big way, you've got to build teams. It's all about the people. If you want to make breakthroughs, it's all about the people you recruit to your team and the way you challenge them with roles. According to Harvard, it's a trending style of leadership, and I think it fits very well in our, "small business audience" of contractors and family business leaders.

I'd like to have your thoughts. Does this article, does this blog, describe you or do you think of yourself in other ways? So please give us the benefit of your thinking in the comments. This is Wayne Rivers. Thank you.