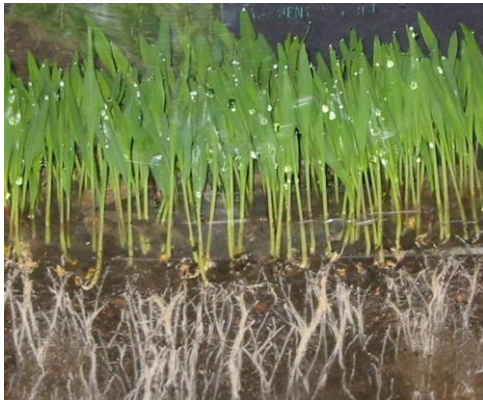


## The Roots of Leadership.

Reference blog post "[Want Good Fruits? Check Your Roots!](#)" published 28 Apr 2013.



I think that one of the most fundamental roots of leadership is benevolence, or love. Benevolence is defined by *Character First!* as "Giving to others' basic needs without having as my motive personal reward". Leadership is all about relationships, and the more benevolence you have, the more people will be attracted to you, and to follow you. Of course, you need to have an acceptable level of competence as well, but competence can always be bought or hired. Benevolence is rare. You know the old saying,

"People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care". It's not just another tired old cliché, it's real, and if you want to be a good leader, you'd better sit up and take notice!

Benevolence may seem to be something impractical when screened through the lenses of the world of business and leadership. After all, you do need to make money, right? Wrong. If that's your motive, your business is doomed to failure in the long run. You can squeeze money out of some greedy people, but you will ultimately fail because you'll run out of greedy people, or they'll swallow you up in turn! If, however, your motive is to deliver something good for people, then in the long run you will have a sustainable business. You just need to work really hard for the first few years and then see the fruits brought in by the bushel! Sounds like some MLM pitch? No! The difference is that you'll need to grow bigger and stronger so that you'll be able to work harder and deliver more and more value as time goes on! Contrary to popular belief, hard work isn't bad for you, nor does working hard exclude working smart. In fact, I find it hard to believe someone who says he doesn't work hard, he only works smart. What he does isn't work at all, it's just a good con job!

The main reason people find it hard to believe that benevolence is so essential to good leadership is that they have a very twisted view of what benevolence really is. Looking at the *Character First!* definition *prima facie*, one could easily be led to believe so. Let's take a closer look.

First, let's look at the motive, or rather, the seeming lack of one. "...without having as my motive personal reward..." Do you know that people can smell selfish motives a mile off? Hmm...then how is it that so many people can be duped by scams? The answer is found two paragraphs above – people are duped by scams because scams appeal to their victims' own greediness! If we do not have personal reward as our motive for being benevolent, or, better still, living in a state of benevolence, people will tend to trust us. With trust comes relationship. With relationship comes need. And with need comes financial reward. People do know that we need to be sustained, and they will sustain us partly for their own benefit. So, are you really capable of being so unselfish? It's just a decision away!

Next, “*Giving to others’ basic needs...*” talks about what people really **do** need. Think carefully. What are some of **your** basic needs? Food? Water? Air? Love? Are you the only person who has those needs? What are some other basic needs? Do people need counsel? Do you need guidance? Do you need affirmation at times? Do people need encouragement in doing and being good? What about country club memberships, do people really need them? The latest fashions? Cult status? Prosperity? Prominence? The basic needs of all people are essentially the same. It is when these basic needs aren’t met that people start to hanker after glitz and tinsel. When a real leader gives to people’s basic needs, he becomes essential to them. This may not be obvious right from the start, but people know it when they are being led by a good leader. Oh, people need correction and instruction, too. Sometimes that includes chastisement, because otherwise they will not turn from destructive habits. Letting people do their own thing can often be the best way of allowing them to be destroyed. Be firm if you do care about those you lead!



Finally, being benevolent means that you will literally be developing people to such an extent that you find yourself out of a job! Does that happen? No need to worry – if it does, it simply means that it’s time for you to step aside and let someone else take over! If you don’t want that to happen, then you must be growing and developing yourself! In fact, if you want to be a benevolent leader, that is most certainly what you **must** do! How else can you deliver the nutrients that your growing followers need on a daily basis? Remember, the notion of “Greater than yourself” ought to be applicable only after you die. Why? Because then, you’ve stopped growing, haven’t you? So, decide to be benevolent from now on. Enjoy the leadership journey!