

QUIS CUSTODIET IPSOS CUSTODES ?

PROJECT 1922

IS IRELAND AT A CROSSROADS AND WHAT DESTINATION SHOULD IT CHOOSE?

LEADERSHIP WITH INTEGRITY?

DYNAMIC PROGRESS OR LONGSTANDING STATUS QUO?

DREAM OR NIGHTMARE?

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POST CELTIC TIGER IRELAND

We in EBEN Ireland have spent many years being critical of low standards in business and suggesting how counterproductive a lack of integrity can be, especially when it risks damaged trust and reputation, likened by Socrates to a fire - easier to keep kindled than to relight when extinguished.

But one of the "elephants in the room", certainly not unique to Ireland, is that 'lack of accountability, transparency and responsibility' has been an often cited criticism of leadership of many democratic states, in effect not that different from dictatorships, particularly when no-one is held accountable for many forms of error and outright wrongdoing.

This contributed to the failure to prevent Ireland's mid-1990s to 2008 "Celtic Tiger" economy collapsing as rapidly as anyone who had seen similar boom-busts before could have foreseen, and did, as any first year economics student who studied property cycles and recessions could have predicted.

When middle ranking Department of Finance officials who wanted to introduce remedial action well beforehand and bring their concerns to their Minister were denied the opportunity by their most senior colleagues, there was clearly something wrong - which recent evidence suggests remains to be addressed a decade later.

When the most severe penalty for unacceptable behaviour in the Irish Public Sector can be "early retirement on full pension", where is the incentive to behave with integrity and set an admirable "tone at the top"?

Ireland took an international lead inspired by an innovative public servant in the 1950s with measures including "export sales relief" (corporation tax free exports) and establishing what is now IDA Ireland to attract foreign direct investment.

Ireland's greatest export, it's people, have proven to be industrious, resilient, innovative, imaginative, creative, friendly and often generous, hence both respected and popular when working all around the world.

Fortunately the Irish people have also proved to be far more courageous than the public leaders and previous governing politicians during the Celtic Tiger period in whom they misplaced their trust, being only capable of taking popular decisions. Anyone can do that. Real leaders are capable of taking correct but unpopular decisions, envisaging the long-term success of the entity they are tasked with leading as they responsibly deliberate with integrity.

The creativity of the Irish has been described in Asia as their ability '*to think around corners*', a talent not shared with many of their Celtic Tiger period political leaders, very few with significant business backgrounds.

Fortunately, though, Ireland possesses many talented, well-educated and creative businesspeople across many sectors. Indeed had the business people been in charge of the nation, the picture could have been very different as they would have had the vision and courage to take the necessary but unpopular decisions which may have avoided a property bubble and unsustainable rises in public spending, salaries and pensions prior to the inevitable international downturn.

A "soft landing" was predicted by those who ignored warnings from as early as 2001. The only people it transpired who had a soft landing were the leaders of the State who were able to avoid any repercussions normally termed "accountability and responsibility" arising from recklessly mismanaging the economy. Yet who retired on pensions more favourable from this small State than those available to people who behave responsibly when employed by much larger nations. At one stage the public sector pay increases had been so significant in Ireland, a nation of under five million, that the prime minister of this country was due to earn more than the President of the USA, with a population of over 300 million.

One problem was that the then leaders seemed to believe they had been responsible for the rising revenues associated with the Celtic Tiger period, when the reality was there was an international boom and it had been a previous generation of more visionary leaders who had laid the foundations for what should have been a period of responsible prosperity.

Had they listened to and acted on available advice, a crash may have been avoided. With the courage to

provide leadership when the crisis hit, there may have been no need for IMF intervention in the management of the State.

Although the crisis hit in 2008, the first substantive response came in 2010, too little too late. This 2 year period was epitomised by a great deal of frustration amongst many citizens, especially those within the business community well used to managing, leading and taking difficult decisions.

The IMF, EC and ECB announced their November 2010 arrival in a simple manner - refusing transport and visibly walking down the streets of the capital, Dublin. The Irish had not been accustomed to such openness.

Progress had previously seemed so unlikely that a few hundred business people present at a Smurfit Business School postgraduate alumni event shortly after the IMF arrived suggested in a show of hands that they would have preferred the IMF had intervened not one but two years earlier. This represented about as severe an indictment possible of the then 'leadership' by those with significant management and leadership experience themselves, yet no-one faced any consequences for collective mismanagement. Why?

Many larger firms, multinationals and indigenous, have experienced the endeavour of the Irish and are performing strongly, exporting well and indeed have been throughout the domestic and international turmoil of recent years.

They were free to take their own decisions without political interference yet with continuing support from vastly experienced State agencies, with a track record of attracting many of the world's top firms to Ireland. The Industrial Development Authority – now IDA Ireland – was founded in 1950 and has been a global leader in this regard for over a generation while Enterprise Ireland provides strong support for indigenous firms.

Promises of a well educated, English speaking workforce with internationally recognised creativity, ready access to the EU market, low corporate taxes and a pro-business environment in many other key areas have been delivered and with post-bubble competitiveness improving, many international firms continue to choose to locate and grow in Ireland for these and a myriad of other reasons.

A further less frequently cited element is the '*fun factor*' – people often find the Irish not only creative, talented and industrious but also easy to get on with. Their naturally friendly demeanour, sense of humour, quick wit and ability to laugh at themselves has exported well and resulted in many multinational corporations enjoying working with the Irish both overseas and in Ireland.

But another "elephant in the room" is that there are two key organisations within Irish society which appear to remain in a time warp, neither innovative, creative nor in touch with changing times, with antiquated procedures and governance which leaves a great deal to be desired, particularly when wrongdoers are protected - the Public Sector and Catholic Church - both apparently immune to change despite much evidence of lost trust and damaged reputation. Rules laid down in another era remain in place and "the way things have always been" prioritised over progress and modernity.

EBEN Ireland organised a "Church Ethics and Leadership" conference in Dublin in 2013 but has to date refrained from commenting in Ireland on the inadequacies of the work practices and culture apparently prevalent across the public sector, confirmed by discussions with over 20 employees in over 20 such bodies in recent years.

Recent developments would appear to confirm what a former Secretary General described a decade ago as "*an endemic cover-up culture throughout the entire public sector*", led by those who seem to believe they can manage with impunity and without accountability to anyone including those who in effect employ them - the Irish people.

So just as EBEN and its members throughout Europe have been critical of low standards in business and constructive in offering solutions, especially in the areas of Corporate Governance and Corporate Social Responsibility, we in EBEN Ireland now believe we have no alternative but to also comment on low standards in public office.

A decade after the onset of substantial national crisis, little substantive appears to have changed.

We comment in the hope and expectation that being CONSTRUCTIVELY CRITICAL (because we care about the country and its people) will both inspire an improvement in governance AND inspire a work

practice revolution which will allow Ireland's many wonderful public servants, constrained by antiquated practices and procedures, who perform well despite rather than because of the culture evident in their organisations, to work in a far more inspirational environment. The focus needs to change from hindering and even prohibiting to permitting and indeed inspiring them to provide world-class levels of service to those they are employed to serve - the Irish public.

The Irish State NOW has the opportunity to break down many barriers to progress which have been erected over many decades which will allow our public servants to relish coming in to work because they know they are respected, their work is appreciated and THEY are afforded the opportunity of being masters of their own destiny, designing the way they conduct their work in a manner which they know facilitates them doing so in the most efficient, expeditious and (yes) enjoyable manner, as many other organisations in Ireland and elsewhere do as a matter of course.

Our public sector was wisely and astutely responsible for attracting many international firms to Ireland from the 1950s, recognising that the predominantly agricultural economy was failing and needed an industrial base. That having been achieved, what we evidently NOW have to tackle is the fact that our public sector itself in terms of work practices and culture seems not to have sufficiently evolved since that period around the 1950's.

Let us remind ourselves though that we proved to be so inept at management of our State that the "Troika" (a Russian term meaning "Group of Three") of European Commission (EC), European Central Bank (ECB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) had to intervene, as they also did in Greece, Cyprus, Portugal and Spain (all countries with national EBEN chapters).

Yet no-one in Ireland was held to account for our many and quite predictable failures and too little seen to have changed in the meantime.

Ireland and its people were failed by an almost Presidential style government, particularly from 1997 to 2011, when the State appeared not to be run by parliament nor the cabinet, rather by a variety of triumvirates of Taoiseach, Tánaiste and Finance Minister. Ireland's constitution would not appear to have contemplated nor proposed that the State should be run by a trio of prime minister, deputy prime minister and finance minister. Rather it advocated cabinet government with an independent Public Service capable of astutely guiding politicians and providing salient management when the politicians proved to be more interested in electoral popularity than national leadership.

However instead of sensible, collaborative management with a long-term perspective, clearly temporary State revenues rising due to a combination of (a) an international trading boom and (b) a domestic property boom, neither of which have ever proved to be sustainable before, were mis-spent with a misguided mantra of *"if I have it, I'll spend it"*.

The opportunity was squandered due to a lack of leadership, vision and basic integrity.

When at last a finance minister realised that spending needed to be more astutely managed, he was replaced by someone who would spend, spend, spend and keep the people happy, failing to appreciate that this apparent bliss was more likely to turn to misery for many Irish people, as it soon did.

Those mis-managing Ireland, elected and unelected, only looked to the short-term as they almost tripled both total government spending and the public sector pay bill, with staff numbers growing by over a third and average salaries more than doubling, not during an era of significant inflation. No-one seemed to factor in what may happen if government revenues actually fell.

While the public primarily believed the subsequent national financial crisis was due to the near insolvency and bailout of banks, the reality is that when any entity triples its spending when income rises, it is opening itself up to deep trouble when income falls, as it did substantially.

The only institution in global society capable of consistently spending more than it earns is a country, termed "losses" for a corporation, because banks are usually willing to lend to nations to finance their "deficit". But when the banks stop lending to a country, it is indicative of deep problems, requiring the intervention of organisations such as the IMF.

Ireland's national debt had previously been astutely reduced and could even have been eliminated had that

trend continued during boom times. Instead because mis-managed government spending continued substantially above income for some years following the onset of recession and mis-managed banks required substantial funds to “re-capitalise”, Ireland's relatively low national debt increased five-fold, from around €40bn to €200bn, a burden for many years to come, partially due to the treatment of bondholders.

European Central Bank insistence that bondholders who had invested in then high flying but subsequently heavy loss making Irish banks, in effect be absolved from having taken any risk and predominantly be repaid in full, helped prevented ‘contagion’ and losses being incurred by other European and American banks, but at the substantial expense of the Irish taxpayer.

The Irish people were irate and incredulous that such ‘bondholders’ could suffer no losses on their failed investments in what the ECB in effect insisted became ‘*risk-free assets*’ in institutions which themselves suffered massive losses and impairments of around 50% of the value of their loan books in a process which lacked transparency and was patently unjust.

Goliath may have provided a bailout but David suffered, described by a leading US business ethics professor as ‘*the greatest lack of distributive justice experienced in a long career*’. This matter remains to be rectified.

Nevertheless significant failures of the Irish public sector during the Celtic Tiger period included an inability to professionally regulate banks or manage the economy in a manner as competent as finance managers in any of Ireland's many private sector corporations would have. Indeed the Department of Finance at the time employed too few professional accountants and economists and senior officials proved to be inept at providing impartial direction to politicians who had spent a decade ignoring a variety of warnings.

The opposite of ‘austerity’ became the norm – rampant spending was accompanied by tax cuts which diminished the tax base and made economic recovery all the more difficult. In 2001 all the other EU Finance Ministers warned their Irish counterpart that such policies were unsustainable, but no remedial action transpired.

The ‘Pre-Budget Outlook’ published by the Irish Department of Finance in November 2009 was very revealing:

‘While taxation receipts have declined, *total current expenditure has continued to increase*. Although taxation is now back at 2003 levels, expenditure by Government Departments in 2009 is about 70 per cent above the level it was in that year’.

‘Another significant pressure is the upward movement of the Public Service pay bill which increased by 115 per cent between 2000 and 2008. This growth has arisen through a combination of an increase in the number of Public Service employees and increasing rates of pay. Average remuneration per employee increased by 68 per cent in the period since 2000 and public service numbers have increased by 29 per cent.’

In 1997 the Public Sector pay bill was €6.8bn with an average salary of €30,539. By 2009 the pay bill had risen to €20.1bn with an average salary of €64,592. increases of 195% and 115% respectively. During this period the number of public employees increased from 222,013 to 310,747, having peaked at 320,387 the previous year, an increase of 44%.

Even after the onset of recession, when the politicians were *saying* they had taken austerity measures, public spending was still rising. Could this be termed “responsible” management of the national finances, or “irresponsible”?

Forecasting and making allowances for what may happen when rising income declines is a basic expectation not only of corporate managers but also those tasked with managing a nation and its finances.

Isn't that why nations have a Public Service employing qualified professionals when many of it's politicians are experienced in neither business nor economics?

Ireland's national finances collapse was entirely predictable and could so easily have been avoided, had those employed to manage the State done what they were employed to do, also the most basic expectation of people displaying “integrity”.

Did substantial pay increases for some senior State employees of around 100 per cent blind them to the

reality which would clearly follow a tripling in government spending?

When the financial crisis hit, some even campaigned against salary related cuts of around 20 percent. A net salary gain of around 80 per cent during times of low inflation was an unjust reward for those who refused to put the best interests of the nation first, when they should have realised that the public sector pay and staffing increases were predominantly financed by private sector firms trading well during a boom and even more temporary revenues arising from a property boom which would soon and inevitably become a bust.

First year economics and accounting students displaying not only integrity but also basic common sense could have done better than those extremely well paid professionals who would appear to have turned a blind eye to the inevitability of their incompetence. And did anyone accept responsibility? Was anyone held accountable? Or does that not happen in Ireland?

The 'Celtic Tiger', a phrase coined by economist Kevin Gardner, refers to a period from the mid-1990s during which Ireland's economic growth was the highest in Europe. This Celtic Tiger era could have laid the foundation for decades of prosperity and a fairer and more just society... had integrity been at the core of national decision-making.

The then leaders, though, lacked the vision to avail of the opportunity presented by unprecedented rising taxation and related revenues. Failing to learn from a multitude of prior local and international boom-bust scenarios, they mistook a Property Boom as being an integral and even admirable part of the thriving Celtic Tiger economy. The two, however, should never have been equated, with the former erroneously permitted to develop alongside the latter. Although the high growth Celtic Tiger economy petered out with the onset of global recession, it was the Property Boom which had the most serious aftermath, with borrowers overextended and banks requiring recapitalisation.

During the preceding decade Irish politicians and public service leaders had received substantial pay and pension increases, 'benchmarked' with the upper echelons of management in modern, efficient, service oriented and profitable private sector enterprises. Yet when crunch came to crunch, those tasked with leadership responsibilities in Ireland avoided the serious decisions which many private sector corporate leaders would have taken in their stride.

At a time when decisive corrective action was both needed and advocated, the then leaders repeated what they had become well practiced at. They avoided the issues, denied the undeniable, berated their critics and shied away from remedial action.

The then governing politicians had sought preservation of power above all else. But they had become used to their primary loyalty being to their political party and the most influential members of society. When it came to astutely using the political power granted them by the people, whom they should have respected as their primary stakeholders, they had so little practice using it for the genuine national interest that when this was what was most required - putting the people and their needs, present and future, first - they floundered.

When recession came and national "turnover" dropped dramatically, modest pay cuts including an increased pension contribution were eventually introduced, the heavier cuts initially imposed on the most senior Public Sector management were quietly reduced, while management refrained from taking decisive corrective measures, including updating an outdated organisational structure and culture.

It wasn't just the most senior State employees who benefitted from Ireland's Celtic Tiger boom period, extraordinarily its State pensioners did too.

Senior public servants in Ireland remain amongst the best paid with one of the world's most generous pension schemes, with many pensioners *entitled to similar pay increases to incumbent employees*, not paid from actuarially managed pension schemes but from day-to-day revenues.

This state of affairs was well illustrated by one former university economics professor who explained how *"my PENSION almost doubled during the Celtic Tiger period."* Ireland did not just "incentivise" its State employees during the boom, it incentivised its State pensioners too.

Such generous pensions appear to have been insufficiently factored in when their pay was 'benchmarked' by a not entirely transparent process between July 2000 and June 2002 with private sector salaries. A university economist resigned from the benchmarking body shortly before publication of its 2002 report.

Surely in such circumstances of having failed the Irish people so demonstratively in the recent past, it is incumbent on the most conscientious and dedicated of Ireland's undoubtedly high quality and well educated senior public servants to NOW seek to transform the antiquated work practices and "don't rock the boat" culture which its employees have to suffer, especially when their own substantial salary increases were based on a "benchmarking" comparison with senior managerial salaries in highly efficient and notably customer service oriented private sector firms employing modern work practices?

It is the least the Irish people could belatedly expect of those tasked with leadership of their nation that they might now display the integrity so lacking during the Celtic Tiger period.

The more recent Irish economic recovery compared with those other European nations visited by the Troika has not been because of the introduction of profound governance changes in the way we manage and organise our government and public sector, rather because Ireland had previously established a strong industrial base with over 1,000 multinationals choosing to locate here while many impressive and ambitious indigenous firms have alongside them developed from Ireland's constructive and supportive business culture and rapidly evolving entrepreneurial environment, well assisted by a State body, Enterprise Ireland.

Many such organisations feature modern, flexible, adaptive, efficient and dynamic workplaces, often enjoyable and even inspirational places to work, capable of bringing out the best in their people, in stark contrast to the "mechanisms of the state" which have changed little since the time such firms were first attracted to our shores and indeed have in the meantime been actively discouraged and prevented from changing.

While the Irish economy has been improving since the collapse of 2008, the provision of public services has by and large not and appears to be constantly in the headlines for all of the wrong reasons. Perhaps we should not be surprised. Could this be because of the way our public sector is structured and managed?

Indeed what has changed since 2008? Accountability? Transparency? Responsibility? Culture?

Do we seem to have learned any lessons arising from the collapse of the Celtic Tiger economy or appear to be doomed to repeat the same mistakes?

Do we really need the Troika to revisit and enforce the required and substantial change which we appear to be incapable of introducing by ourselves?

We celebrated the exit of the Troika even if their work transpired to be very incomplete. It would seem this was treated as being the *end* of the significant progress that was required to transform the antiquated operational mechanisms of the Irish State, when really their work represented just the *beginning*.

The Troika's departure also seems to have been treated as being the end of the sense of urgency that necessitated the IMF and EU having to intervene in the management of our State because we had proved to be incapable of doing so ourselves, ignoring all warnings that we were driving at full speed down a cul-de-sac instead of applying the brakes.

What should have been the *beginning of the end* of a failed operational culture little changed over a century instead appears to have been the *end of the beginning* of the substantial and rapid change that the collapse of the Celtic Tiger era signalled was so necessary.

It is now increasingly evident that what most needed to be "benchmarked" from 2000 to 2002 then promptly reinvented was operational practices, not salaries.

Especially when the comparison was with the earnings of those working for modern, flexible, adaptable, service-driven and dynamic organisations for whom everything associated with "status quo" is reviled, not "change" which is an integral part of the fabric of such firms.

Indeed substantial public sector work practice improvements and modernisation were supposed to have been a key part of the "benchmarking" process.

It should be recalled that 75 per cent of the "benchmarking" related salary increases were 'strongly recommended' to be paid only after work practice improvements commenced. When then Finance Minister and subsequent EU Commissioner McCreevy was asked in 2002 what would happen if the work practice improvements never actually commenced, he replied that 75 per cent of the salary increases should not be

awarded.

Work practice improvements which were supposed to have been introduced as part of the 2000-2002 “benchmarking” process by and large remain unaddressed nearly two decades later.

Does the proudly "independent" Irish nation really want to arrive at the anniversary of 2022 with a similar public service "culture" we inherited from our former colonial rulers in 1922?

Indeed British politicians and Civil Servants appear to be more accountable than ours as they actually resign when found to have been involved in mistakes and wrongdoing.

As things stand, "the way we do things" especially the "culture" appears to be so similar to that inherited from British Rule in 1922, facilitated by some of their civil servants as our public service was established, and so little appears to have changed in the meantime, that we do not yet appear to have gained our "Independence" from a culture and work practices that require our parliamentarians to far too frequently stand up in the Dáil and not only "defend the indefensible" but defend what they know in their hearts to be indefensible.

All that changes is the party of the Minister and the Opposition, because all Ministers in all Governments since the foundation of our State have had to defend the actions or inactivity of nameless, blameless and unaccountable individuals, protected by an unspoken mantra that because they are employees of the State they are above reproach.

Until Ireland stops turning a blind eye to the continuing failings of its Public Sector, for which no-one is ever responsible, and radically transformed its operational capability by introducing fully modern work practices and completely changed the antiquated and dysfunctional "culture", it is incapable and undeserving of being perceived as either a "modern" or "Independent State".

NATURAL LEADERS

Leaders and managers appointed to a new role in an organisation with which they are unfamiliar can come with a great advantage – especially when they are *less* familiar with the industry so they can challenge preconceptions and status quos by asking why, why, why?

Isn't it extraordinary then that so many employers search for people with experience in their same industry rather than looking for the brightest people with the best fit for the culture of their organisation? The way they do things.

Yet the one factor which may in due course transpire to make the most significant contribution to their organisation may be missing from the cv and only become apparent at interview. Enthusiasm. For meeting people, getting to know them, what makes them tick, learning about their new organisation and role and suggesting different and maybe better ways to do things.

Because they are coming from the outside they have the advantage of seeing things differently than those who have been insiders for some time.

Yet when the natural leaders challenge the long established status quos, as they will, they are capable of doing so in a non-challenging manner. Because they appreciate that people are slow to respond to new ideas and change, which needs to be handled tactfully, carefully, step by step, respecting those who will take a while to appreciate the benefits of a fresh approach.

So natural leaders ask questions and intimate things in such a manner that the insiders become the people suggesting the changes which the former outsider believes most appropriate.

Natural leaders know that people buy-in and best respond to changes when they are included in the process rather than excluded and especially when they feel (or are made to feel) the ideas to do things better are their own, when they may be or a combination of suggestions from others too.

Natural leaders know that people can't be *told* to do something differently, dictated to nor spoken down to in a disrespectful manner. They know that people respond best to being included and respected and valued and

appreciated.

Above all natural leaders know that people are creatures of habit so if changes are to become other than superficial and temporary, with people giving lip-service to the new order but actually continuing to do things in the manner to which they had become accustomed, that changes cannot be demanded of people.

Changes will only become genuine improvements when people genuinely *want* to do things better. A cycle of everyone feeling sufficiently involved to be constantly seeking to do things better only happens when people in all areas and at all levels are actually *inspired* to change.

Natural leaders know that while some people will prefer to keep doing things the way they always have done, that the people who will be most satisfied with such a scenario will be their more adventurous competitors. They know that people will switch their allegiance as customers to the organisation which offers genuinely better service, as will inevitably happen when it is their leaders who prioritise transforming “the way we do things” and this differs substantially from “the way we always have done things”.

WEAK LEADERS

Weak leaders rarely challenge the status quo or ask “can we be doing better?” They believe in “not rocking the boat”. What does this achieve?

Weak leaders permit obstacles to progress and fresh thinking to be built into the system rather than being eradicated. What does this achieve?

Weak leaders only pursue doing the popular thing in lieu of the right thing.

Weak leaders accept a culture which can promote the compliant rather than those with vision and courage, while rewarding the non-performers by accepting their mediocrity.

Weak leaders can accept the best performers being vilified for wanting to “*go the extra mile*” because this shows up the inadequacy of those who don't.

Weak leaders permit non-routine customer requests being met by routine responses such as “*not my job*”. Weak leaders permit a “*can't do*” response to not only customers but also requests from colleagues for co-operation.

Weak leaders can be aloof and unapproachable. A manager should never have to say “my door is always open” as it should always be. Staff should always feel welcome to approach someone much more senior, especially when they bring suggestions how the organisation could do things better from their often far more in depth knowledge and appreciation of that than a manager.

Managers should in turn want and be inspired to pass on suggestions from their staff to the leaders even if they personally disagree, giving credit where due to those who show sufficient interest to want to make improvements.

Weak leaders can permit so many levels to exist in their organisation that progress is slow, as only people at a certain level are permitted to perform specific tasks. Does this achieve anything constructive?

Weak leaders can permit many levels to exist in their organisation that decision making is slow as no-one will accept the responsibility for the outcome if unfavourable.

Weak leaders permit “it isn't in the budget” to be an excuse so something interesting or innovative cannot be tried.

The key measure for some weak leaders is numbers employed not numbers of satisfied customers. Ultimately the suspicion is that organisations led by such people may be primarily run for the benefit of the employees not customers.

Weak leaders perpetuate a system which allows those who opt out of the workplace or contributing to society to be incentivised for doing so. They delusionally describe this as “full employment”.

Weak leaders perpetuate a system which allows those who cheat to be permitted to cheat without repercussions.

Weak leaders cover up rather than own up when something goes wrong. “*This shall never get out*” becomes their mantra.

Weak leaders who do little to change “the way we have always done things” contribute to their people ultimately producing nearer their worst than their best. When people working for such weak leaders are denied the opportunity to achieve, they are more inspired to leave or “fall asleep” than put their heart and soul into their jobs.

STRONG LEADERS

In stark contrast, organisations led by strong leaders promote the best and deal with the worst. Inspiring them to do better or preferring they work elsewhere.

Strong leaders value variety and flexibility which they ensure are widely practiced and remain ambitions not obstacles.

Strong leaders ensure many people can perform many functions because multi-skilling and wanting to do and learn more is an integral part of the dynamic culture they create.

Strong leaders do not limit the functions people can perform, rather they broaden them and give them more responsibility.

Strong leaders inspire people to achieve and produce their best. For strong leaders there is no such thing as setting too good an example and being told to slow down.

Strong leaders inspire people to advance and give them the opportunity to achieve. Strong leaders welcome people at all levels challenging them politely how they could be doing things better.

Strong leaders are approachable and seek better ways of doing things. They welcome ideas and do not refuse them as being untried or too risky.

Strong leaders do not react to every problem which arises by wanting to take on more people, rather see how people less busy elsewhere throughout the entire organisation can contribute.

Strong leaders do not create rules based on work practice prohibitions. “*Can't do*” is not in their vocabulary. Rather they inculcate a “*let's see what we can do*” response to unusual or non-routine customer and co-worker requests.

Strong leaders create a genuine incentive to save and not waste money – and their people manage the finances like it were their own. They ensure spending budgets are justified each year, not just “*last year's plus*”. For them “*it's not in the budget*” doesn't mean something worthwhile but previously unpredicted can't be considered. Plans and priorities are always capable of adaptation. They recognise that flexibility is a critical managerial strength.

Strong leaders ensure key measures of “numbers of people” refer to satisfied customers not employee numbers. They are rated on performance and even stakeholder satisfaction levels, not numbers employed.

Strong leaders when facing financial crisis prefer salary cuts to job cuts. They recognise that firing many people may satisfy the stock markets but not their families. They take the biggest pay cuts themselves to lead by example. They are wise enough to appreciate that a few years of lower salaries may help their organisation survive the crisis, yet have an appreciative and experienced workforce should better times transpire.

Strong leaders ensure barriers to progress are demolished not created and that “level” describes the playing field - not a key barrier to progress. They inspire people's creativity not prohibit them from performing to their best.

At the end of the day because the organisation is primarily run for the benefit of the end-consumers, those it

is tasked with serving, their employees look forward to coming in to work because they know they are valued and appreciated and get a great kick out of co-operating and “superseding the customer's expectations”.

In many organisations progressive, flexible and adaptable practices such as this sample are commonplace. The shame is that those who haven't had the opportunity to work in such environments don't or can't appreciate what they may be missing out on. Being inspired to produce their best on an almost daily basis gives people a “lift” which makes their lives and those they share their lives with better.

Strong leaders appreciate that “comfort zones” such as “the way we have always done things” ultimately do not lead to as “comfortable” a work life as some may expect when people are restless and can't wait to get home in the evening.

While weak leaders tolerate mediocrity and fail to inspire brilliance, confident leaders employ and promote people more likely to shake the place up and challenge the status quo, not because they will toe the party line and not rock the boat.

Strong leaders enter meetings with ideas and plans, yet also do so with a sufficiently “open mind”. They seek open and honest discussion, dissent and alternatives and recognise this is why they have teams. They consider the options including plans being changed or improved by their colleague's observations, ideas and suggestions. “Getting their own way” is of secondary importance to “doing the best thing”. They dislike seeing their organisation standing still and prefer to see it and its people progressing, so they listen, learn and lead.

THE TRUE PURPOSE OF ANY ORGANISATION

Too many organisations under both private and public ownership are run for the benefit of the management and employees not the people who it was formed to provide a service to. So their people focus on themselves and a “what's in it for me?” culture develops whereby every situation is evaluated from that perspective, failing to realise that many people may only be contributing a fraction of their true potential.

Their organisation becomes a collection of little silos, of units and departments, with an insufficient appreciation of their role in the organisation at large and how much more they could be contributing, given the opportunity. Some areas may too busy and others far from it, yet no effort is made to balance these inequities because of the “blinkers” of practices which prevent the organisation being seen as a single entity with a common purpose.

Some people have even been known to come in to work with no work to perform so are paid to read the newspaper from front to back every day. Great for newspaper circulation but not motivation. With a bit of vision these people would be given the opportunity to use their talents elsewhere in the organisation, especially when seen as a single entity. But not when each little group is seen as a mini-fiefdom and keeping employee numbers up guarantees receiving the same budgetary allocation as last year even if this can no longer be justified.

A “sense of entitlement” develops irrespective of whether people genuinely deserve that which they receive. They seek more benefits every time a change is suggested rather than being inspired to come up with the suggestions themselves. They are sometimes even given the opportunity to vote whether they want to implement the changes which management believe necessary for the organisation to improve and evolve and sometimes even survive.

The organisation which doesn't evolve, dies. Except if it is in a sector with no competition in which case it is the employees who die. Of frustration and boredom and exclusion. Especially when they are crying out to be involved, included and challenged.

The “way we have always done things” becomes cast in stone when practices favour the employees over the customers. Even more so when antiquated practices, perhaps relevant in a different era, are strenuously

defended in a never-ending game whereby all proposed changes are objected to and used as bargaining tools in extracting greater benefits for employees from management.

Those who engage in such practices and games may not have experienced what it is like to work in a dynamic, evolving organisation where the staff are fundamentally happy because their talents are well utilised rather than grumbling about anything and everything because fundamentally many of their talents lie dormant.

Where is the incentive to perform and “produce their best”? When people are preferred who are more likely to maintain “the way we have always done things” over those with a genuine vision how much better the place could be. When “don't rock the boat” leads to it going backwards rather than forwards, picking up fewer satisfied passengers on its journey yet staffed by more and more disenchanted employees.

When the people are challenged and stimulated intellectually they don't challenge management because they feel involved and included and look forward to coming in to work. When the people are not challenged or stimulated intellectually they do challenge management because they feel uninvolved and excluded and “at the end of the day” can't wait to get home in the evening.

The performers and reformers become disinterested, especially when they see the non-performers and non-reformers protected and even promoted.

Those with integrity switch off this faculty when they see those doing wrong protected. And promoted. Even more so when they see those with the courage to speak up ostracised and told they will never be promoted.

So dynamic people lose their dynamism, enthusiastic people lose their enthusiasm, people come to work out of habit rather than pleasure. Sick leave becomes the norm rather than the exception. The most talented people leave and the uninspired stay. They retire on the job. What they do in the evening and at the weekend inspires them when their workplace doesn't.

Policy documents which promise much but fail to deliver and revised organisation charts changing only who reports to whom ultimately lead to little progress if the very ethos is flawed and outdated. When responsibility for change is delegated to outsiders yet their reports and plans for genuine progress gather dust because there is no genuine accountability and incentive to change. The people who benefit from a long-established status quo lack the courage to improve and change. Everyone at all the higher levels, of which there are many, benefit from maintenance of the status quo, so people at the lower levels remain uninspired and stagnate.

When the most vociferous people protect the “way we do things” and seek some extra benefit in lieu for everything new.

When those who do little get more and no-one addresses their non-performance. What example does that set?

When such organisations face genuine competition, something they fear, they fail and are replaced by progressive organisations which genuinely value their people over practices and customers over themselves. Whose people can't wait to get to work rather than get home from it because their jobs feature responsibility and variety and flexibility. Hence their talents are availed of and they are inspired to contribute new ideas and approach their personal potential rather than waste away and look forward to the weekend. Even on Monday.

Why is it that in some organisations *variety and flexibility* are appreciated as contributing significantly to employee satisfaction and improved customer service, while in others these so-necessary qualities of *variety and flexibility* are almost dirty words? In which people work in their little silos doing the same thing much of the time, unaware of what some of their colleagues do and how they could be contributing and cooperating?

When a mantra of *its not my job* instead of *how can I be further contributing?* is perpetuated?

Surely such dinosaur-like organisations should be extinct as should such antiquated work practices? And if they aren't, why are they not? Are they led by dinosaurs?

Anyone capable of describing work practices such as these as practices need to consider could they be better described as *malpractices*, being damaging to the intellectual capacity of their employees. People need stimulation and expect their workplace to provide it.

What most certainly is malpractice is when the reformers are maltreated and the “I’m alright jack’s” are applauded.

When those who do right and object to wrongdoing are maltreated and can be called “disgraceful” while the wrongdoers go not only unpunished but are pro-actively protected?

When a mantra of “this shall never get out” means owning up and being accountable are not expected of them.

An Enron style “rank and yank” policy whereby the least effective 10 percent of workers lose their jobs annually may be severe. An over competitive and excessively “me me me” culture is hardly a role model for other organisations. But nor is a good example set by those organisations where the least effective 10 or perhaps 20 percent are allowed to meander along and maybe even be protected and promoted.

The frustration for many good workers is that they actually *know who* the performers and non-performers are but have little say in doing anything about it. If they were given the opportunity to report not just the malpractices associated with a wide variety of potential wrongdoing but also the *malpractices* associated with a wide variety of laziness and ineffective work, how different might their organisation become?

Could the non-performers justifiably defend their ineffectiveness and have any reason to complain if this were no longer accepted and they were no longer protected? And when dealing with the least productive workers fails, would losing them make any real difference to the overall productivity of the group when they contribute so little anyway?

Great leaders recognise that the currently least effective employees may have the potential to be lifted up by a more inspirational, dynamic and inclusive culture. Many may actually be inspired to wake up from their boredom and make a decent contribution.

Great leaders know that people mainly used to doing the one thing thrive on variety. That being able to undertake roles previously only performed by colleagues gives people more to look forward to coming in to work for. That when someone is away that others can do what needs to be done. That the end-service can be provided to the “customers” irrespective of who is and isn't working that day. That giving people responsibility to change the way they do things for the better can give them a great sense of achievement and purpose well beyond their payslip. That everyone has potential which the organisation may not be recognising when the “way we do things” is cast in stone.

Yet do those more likely to object to changes for the better, new ways of doing things and slyly do whatever they can to bring about the failure of initiatives, really deserve to keep their job when their behaviour is so counter-productive? Do they need to be reminded why they are employed and what the very *purpose* of the organisation is?

When “whats in it for me?” is allowed to be prioritised over “what's in it for our customers?”

When people who make a mistake are never again promoted rather than being permitted to learn from the experience.

When those who never make a mistake because they never stick their head above the parapet to be counted are rewarded with promotions.

When the courageous are discouraged and the cowards are encouraged.

When those with a vision are silenced and those who like things just as they have always been are permitted to have the louder voice.

When staff are given a vote whether they would like something new or not and have the option whether to respond to or veto initiatives from management.

Who wins in such situations?

People respond to being included, formally and informally, in the decision making process. They like being given the opportunity to suggest their ideas and know they will be well received not buried.

How many organisations hire consultants when all they have to do is listen to their own employees and be prepared to act on their suggestions? They often know the best way of going things as it is they who perform

the work not their managers. But how seldom are they given the opportunity to fully contribute to the success of their organisation?

Where is the incentive to change when the “board of directors” (or cabinet) are heavily influenced by the senior management who they rely on to implement their policies? Or at least pretend to with their lip-service.

When shortly after the appointment of a new director (or minister) the senior management manage them and lower their expectations rather than the director (or minister) managing the senior management and raising their expectations?

One wonders how aware are Board members (or ministers) that work practices may be antiquated and in urgent need of reform? Do they care? Will the organisation they are responsible for ever make real progress if they only deal with the senior management? Especially with those for whom “protecting their own patch” is secretly their only true goal?

CROSSING THE LINE

What is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour?

Who decides or should decide where the lines between right and wrong, fairness and cheating, respect and disrespect, honour and dishonour should be drawn?

Strong leaders own up and don't cover-up. They accept responsibility for mistakes and persuade others to do the same, ensuring they and those they lead live and learn from such experiences. They set an example by not *denying the undeniable* because they know few are actually fooled by doing so.

Strong leaders appreciate that disrespect and *defending the indefensible* damages trust and reputation, likened by Socrates to a fire - *easier to keep lit but far harder to relight when allowed to go out*.

Strong leaders know that showing respect attracts respect, including when they do not try to “*pull wool over the eyes*” of others and instead tactfully tell things as they really are.

Strong leaders know respect comes from being open, honest and transparent and disrespect starts “*when first we practice to deceive*”.

Strong leaders have a strong sense of what is right and wrong and what is in the best interests of their organisation in both the short and long-term. They inculcate these standards throughout their organisation.

Strong leaders know when to accept the necessity for short-term pain if it may contribute to longer term gain.

Strong leaders also know when to avoid short-term gain if it may risk longer term pain, especially to reputation.

Strong leaders know that those who believe in “winning at all costs” and choose to cross the lines of what many might judge to be acceptable behaviour risk the loss of respect and trust, personal and collective, perhaps even bringing their organisation and its sector (or sport) into disrepute.

QUIS CUSTODIET IPSOS CUSTODES ?

Throughout all societies, sectors and cultures, the degree of personal integrity of an organisation's senior individuals contributes significantly to the prevailing level of corporate integrity, with some cultures facilitating and promoting and others prohibiting and hindering the personal integrity of employees coming to the fore.

Intolerance of low integrity by leaders of high personal integrity ensures unethical instances are not

condoned or repeated, while the acceptance of low integrity by lesser leaders ensures instances are permitted and hence more likely to be repeated by the corporate culture prevalent within their organisation, not resulting in healthy workplaces where people feel inspired to produce their best and contribute to gradually evolving change. Protecting wrongdoers damages the health of everyone else as well as those other critical ingredients in the mix of what makes for a successful organisation – trust and reputation.

If integrity has been described as “*doing the right thing when no-one is looking*”, when those the people trust to manage a State fail to “do the right thing when everyone is looking”, without any apparently adverse consequences for actions which if known would disappoint many, compounded by a lack of accountability, transparency and leadership, a poor example is set which would not be tolerated in any other sector of society.

The mantra needs to become “*the status quo is not be an option*” not a policy of “*endemic cover-up*” if Ireland is to be seen as a modern, fair, efficient and truly democratic State, led by people of integrity, both those elected and unelected by the people to do so.

All of whom we trust to “*do the right thing*” - by the people, not for and benefitting themselves. All of whom we expect to possess and display the courage required to provide the leadership with integrity which so many people in Irish society from a diversity of backgrounds provide on a daily basis in their own organisations, quietly and to no acclaim.

Like in many other nations, this is what they also expect of those in more public positions of leadership, who are *expected* to be more completely accountable to the public they are employed to serve with a “*duty of care*”.

Except in Ireland where the opposite can apply and accountability is only conspicuous by its absence.

Whereby poor performers and leaders lacking in courage continue to be protected by an *unspoken mantra* that because they are employees of the State they are above reproach.

How many public servants have been fired for “doing the wrong thing” or substandard performance, even by low standards?

When protecting such people is seen to be “the right thing” rather than “the wrong thing”, how can those responsible expect others in society – including those in business – to prioritise integrity in their multitude of dealings, when those who conspicuously “do the wrong thing” appear to “get away with it”?

The public are not fooled when malpractices are covered up, then exposed, with no-one culpable held to be accountable. Yet somehow throughout the decades in Irish society, those responsible seem to believe that the public are fooled and expect no better. Being employed by the State – especially in a position of authority and leadership – should result in *higher* not minimal accountability.

Alas in so many instances in the history of this immature democracy, precisely the opposite has been the case. The higher up someone is in Irish society, the greater the amount of responsibility, the lower the level of accountability. “*Getting away with it*” has seemed to be the primary ambition, often achieved, as if that was all that mattered. And as if no-one noticed. Or cared.

The fact is that many do notice and are very concerned that low integrity at the top of society filters down. Yet feel powerless as they observe the *propinquity* as endemic in Irish society as the culture of cover-up and denial of responsibility, evident when those chosen to be the *guardians at the gate* believe themselves to be in such a privileged position of impunity that they are accountable to nobody but themselves. Which means they get away scot-free with any form of error and wrongdoing and hope no-one notices. But they do.

If those who hold positions of trust face no penalty when they breach this trust, including loss of position, where is the incentive to perform well and do and be seen to do the right thing? Remaining nameless and blameless is not the answer. Nor is setting up tribunals and enquiries with no powers to admonish those they find to be culpable, reporting years later.

When such people are *removed* from organisations, the culture has an opportunity to improve. But when they are protected and promoted, the culture is more likely to further degenerate and those with integrity go back into their shells, dislike coming to work, underperform and perhaps opt to leave.

Surely this *SBT - Sad But True* - scenario is not the *destiny* the 1916 proclamation signatories desired for this fledgling nation? Hopefully at this moment not much more patience is required by those who genuinely care for each other, before good, kind and generous people's lives can be transformed and they can all win their own league when those with vision and integrity are allowed to flourish.

What may appear to be a *destiny* may not transpire to be the case and what changes it can be people's behaviour. When they act well towards other people, being kind and appreciative, speak up rather than remain silent, they contribute to a more favourable environment and a more positive destiny. But when they behave badly towards other people, remain silent or do not appreciate those who may have been kind to them, they can contribute to a less favourable environment or culture and a more negative destiny. People's behaviour can change a destiny.

Positive people with a keen interest in both other people and their organisation can change a destiny from negative to positive, notably when more people are included in rather than excluded from contributing to the direction the organisation takes. It is precisely such concerned and creative people with a social conscience and an "eye for improvement" which organisations need to suggest and run with many ideas and reforms.

They need to be strongly and unanimously supported, notably by those who erroneously believe they benefit from a status quo based on comfortable inertia rather than movement forward, which they short-sightedly endeavour to protect rather than improve, perhaps fearing change, maybe lacking the imagination and willpower to themselves pro-actively suggest improvements.

"*I'm alright jack*" people without the vision to see beyond the status quo which suits them just fine as it contributes to a not-too-demanding job. Which is their primary concern. Even if many other employees as a consequence of "*little or no change*" are uninspired to fully contribute and hence produce well below their best.

"*Sitting on the fence*" never improved an organisation and in a competitive marketplace such firms are passed by. Then wonder why they are floundering in comparison with more dynamic organisations which *encourage* their people to be "**pro-active**".

In contrast, "**reactive**" organisations only do something new or different when they are faced with little alternative and can actively discourage their people from suggesting ideas for improvement. In due course the more capable, creative and interested staff just give up trying and the organisation becomes neither proactive nor reactive, rather "**inactive**".

When what is foremost in people's minds when they reach work on Monday morning is the following "Happy Friday" evening and what they will do next weekend, there is something wrong. Yet the subsequent five days seem to take an eternity because their working lives are so slow and lacking in dynamism. When only their friends and family experience their livelier persona, there is clearly something wrong.

When their colleagues and environment fail to inspire them to try something new or give their all in servicing their co-workers or customers, there is clearly something wrong.

When people are more inspired by going home rather than coming to work and their voluntary work in other organisations such as sporting and cultural engages them far more than their primary workplace, there is clearly something wrong.

When absenteeism and sick leave are a notable feature of a workplace, indicative of an unhealthy environment, there is clearly something wrong.

Those who believe they may be "doing the right thing" by their colleagues by objecting to any form of change may actually be doing them a great disservice, further damaging rather than protecting employee welfare.

It must be very frustrating for constructive and conscientious workers, genuinely interested in their colleagues, customers and workplaces, when when they know better ways of doing things but don't feel their suggestions would receive a receptive audience or if they did those who persistently object to change would try and erect further barriers to progress or seek pay increases for every minor improvement.

Do those who actively prevent change realise that both they and their employees – as well as their customers – could all substantially benefit from doing things differently and better?

Those who fail to recognise that *failing to inspire workers* may be doing them more emotional harm than good, may actually be failing their colleagues, especially when they seek unnecessary confrontation and conflict, never a substitute for cooperation and genuine collaboration. While positivity can bring out their finer qualities, negativity damages people. Both can also be contagious.

Perhaps that is why so little has changed over the decades and why absenteeism and sick leave are so prevalent. If only those who object to change knew how interesting a dynamic workplace could be, they would instead embrace it.

If objectors managed a sports team at a weekend and saw opportunities for improvement, would they really remain silent or object?

Looking forward to coming in to work better than having to fight over every change as if it were the end of the world.

Perhaps this is the only working environment objectors are familiar with and they are unsure how to change it. Maybe their previous attempts to improve their workplace met with failure, shot down by those who prefer things as they are, lacking the vision, courage or enthusiasm to do better and make their working lives as interesting as their personal lives.

But it needn't be like this. This kind of environment is becoming rarer and rarer, sometimes only the preserve of publicly owned bodies although such "cultures" still exist in the private sector too. A deficiency of imagination and lack of genuine interest in people's welfare is not the preserve of the public sector.

If the main reason people are staying in their job rather than seeking a better one is their pension, no matter what age they may be, surely there is something wrong and an onus on their employer to instead "inspire their people to produce their best".

In contrast, world-class workplaces naturally evolve as they find better ways of doing things and seek rather than object to change. The first step on this path can be to ASK people for their ideas and suggestions for improvement, be receptive and encourage them to make a greater contribution.

A secret in too many organisations, public and private, is that everyone likes to be respected, but too many feel unappreciated.

There are four magic phrases and six magic words which can transform people's lives both inside and outside work—*please, thank you, well done* and *sorry*.

Yet somehow too few managers, perhaps uninspired themselves, feel the need to regularly avail of these words and provide encouragement, with their absence being discouraging. Everyone can remember how good they felt when their boss said *well done*, even if it was a distant memory. SBT.

Politeness also indicates respect and invites it in return. When people regularly say *please* and *thank you* to each other, not just in the workplace, their lives can be enriched. By and large, asking nicely beats a firm command any day, especially when the reason for the request is well explained and people are included in the rationale for the task and where it fits into the overall picture of what is going on.

Even more difficult can be when a mistake is made and someone displays the courage to own up, explain how it happened and says *sorry*. Especially when this person is the manager, this sends a message that it is acceptable to discuss errors and mistakes so everyone learns how to avoid them in the future. Everyone benefits and the working environment is far healthier as a result. Astute managers build such opportunities into their regular routine and start meetings by mentioning mistakes they have made, often with a touch of humour although the matter may be more serious. Inviting people to own up can be healthy and result in everyone learning from the experience.

In contrast, staying silent and covering up achieves little and can be detrimental to people's health. While the "*learning organisation*" can prove to be an inspirational workplace, the "*organisation in denial*" can be very challenging and damage people for all the wrong reasons. What does this achieve?

Perhaps the greatest managerial secret is that treating others in the manner you would like to be treated yourself can bring out the best in people and the organisation which consistently does this and indeed encourages this makes far greater progress than the one which fails to inspire people's better instincts.

Yet too many organisations promote people to managerial positions who do not possess the ability to recognise the talents latent in other people and the interest in them to actually want them to succeed.

When the more self-centred are made managers or leaders, their primary ambition can be to make themselves appear to be brilliant and their path to progression includes either ignoring the talents in others or being incapable of recognising these. This promotional error can be compounded when such people show little interest in people other than themselves. Some may even be incapable of showing an interest in others, want them to fail and actively contribute to their producing far below their best.

Yet organisations continue to promote such people to managerial positions, perhaps mistaking their self-confidence and charm for managerial ability, when fundamentally they are only interested in themselves. This could perhaps be described as "*the promotional fallacy*".

Experience suggests that GIVERS "more interested in others than themselves" can be trusted with the responsibility of managing other people while TAKERS "more innately interested in themselves than others" cannot be trusted to be considerate of the needs and interests of other people.

Their ambition for power is not to use it to benefit the organisation, just their own sometimes fragile egos, especially as they engage in a variety of intimidatory behaviour towards colleagues. This needs to be recognised early and when managerial colleagues or HR departments receive reports of intimidation they need to listen well and take prompt remedial action, including removing managerial responsibility from such people, rather than protect the bully and attack their accuser, evidence of weak management.

Fortunately those who abuse power, often lose power, receiving little sympathy from their peers. Astute leaders neither employ nor promote them.

Astute leaders are well aware that the tone is undoubtedly set at the top, especially when leaders and managers are capable of *turning the organisation chart upside down* and appreciating their key role in supporting the rest of the people employed.

Astute leaders know when they and their managers see their role as *selflessly serving their colleagues rather than vice-versa* and *doing the right thing when no-one is looking*, integrity is more likely to be inculcated throughout the organisation.

Jim Collins and his team examined many companies to find those which went from '*Good to Great*' and their research found that such companies (especially compared with less successful "comparison companies" in the same sector) had what they describe as 'Level 5 leadership during the pivotal transition years'.

Citing five leadership levels, Collins notes that 'Level 5' leaders who:

"build enduring greatness through a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will' also 'channel their ego needs away from themselves and into the larger goal of building a great company. It's not that Level 5 leaders have no ego or self-interest. Indeed they are incredibly ambitious, but their ambition is first and foremost for the institution, not themselves...

They set up their successors for success in the next generation, where others set up their successors for failure... They are resolved to do whatever it takes to make the company great, no matter how big or hard the decisions... They display a compelling modesty, are self-effacing and understated.

In contrast, two thirds of comparison companies had leaders with gargantuan personal egos that contributed to the demise or continued mediocrity of the company".

For some the results of their research were surprising, but perhaps this in itself should have been the real surprise, because proud people fail to recognise that many people dislike that quality and actually prefer modesty to arrogance, especially in those whose role in society requires commanding respect.

Which of these widely differing characteristics is more likely to enhance respect and trust? Pride or humility?

Irrespective of one's role in society, many would do well to consider whether a touch more humility would work far better than a dose of ego, arrogance, hubris or pride.

Management author Ken Blanchard and clergyman Norman Peale in their 'Power of Ethical Management'

observed one aspect of humility:

“People with humility don’t think less of themselves, they just think about themselves less”.

For some reason even when pride visibly does more harm than good, proud people persist in the behaviour that can so readily damage trust and respect, even though they know it may result in their undoing. For some it just seems to be part of their personality and little seems to distract them from availing of every opportunity to let others know how brilliant they believe themselves to be.

As Shakespeare remarked:

“I can see his pride peep through each part of him”.

CS Lewis provided insight into the competitive nature of pride:

“A proud man is always looking down on things and people, and of course, as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you... Pride leads to every other vice... because it is competitive by nature... being better at something than someone else. Each person’s pride is in competition with everyone else’s pride... Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man... It is the comparison that makes you proud: the pleasure of being above the rest.”

Contrary to popular belief the hallmark of many successful leaders is actually *humility*, not the pride, ego and arrogance which may provide some personal satisfaction but which ultimately commands less respect. Which trait are followers going to be more inspired to follow?

But as humble people do not seek personal publicity, often deflecting praise to others while also accepting responsibility for the failings of others, there may be far more humble leaders in society than many may realise.

The writings of Dickens and Shakespeare perhaps endure because of their keen observations of human nature. Dickens noted the barrier presented by pride: “*but struggling with these better feelings was pride*”.

Shakespeare observed both the vagaries of business and the potential impact on ego of those who acquire position or wealth or both from business: “*my pride fell with my fortunes*”.

When humble people suffer a setback, people tend to be supportive. But when proud people fail at something, consider how many may be privately delighted? “*Serves them right*”.

The old expression, ‘*pride comes before a fall*’ can be so appropriate. Do people really respect exceptionally proud people? Indeed are they capable of realising when others are actually deterred by their arrogance and hubris?

Astute leaders recognise that pride can damage relationships and be a barrier to progress, so they make a conscious decision to leave their ‘ego’ at the front door of their workplaces, homes, sports clubs and places of worship. They are astute enough to realise that often the only person pride may satisfy is themselves. And no-one else.

Which is more likely to garnish respect: boasting and bragging or downplaying your own role in something worthwhile? More humble people derive satisfaction from refraining to mention one of their achievements and can be embarrassed when others do so for them. Astute leaders know it is far better that people hear about their achievements from others than from themselves.

Humble Leaders also appreciate the importance of guiding and assisting their colleagues in their collective endeavours, in contrast to Proud Leaders who seek personal gain and advancement from many situations, seemingly motivated by “*what’s in it for me*”?

Somehow in life, self-centred people fail to recognise that trait in themselves and that is perhaps why “*you can’t tell a selfish person they are selfish as they just can’t see it*”.

The proud and selfish often believe that if they are to advance in the organisation they have to be proud and selfish, but very often the opposite is the case, especially when wiser people are in charge of managing promotional opportunities.

In many organisations the eventual reward for cooperation in teamwork can be *personal* gain and advancement, especially when this is not seen to be a primary goal.

Those who seek personal acclaim by promoting themselves and their apparent achievements, often fail to recognise that *putting others and "the team" first* may not only result in collective achievement but also respect, denied to the most self-centred and proud, no matter how hard they seek personal recognition.

Astute leaders appreciate that the combination of personal humility and professional pride in the welfare and achievements of the people they lead is far more respected than excessive personal pride, which does not endear itself to colleagues, including those who may regret employing or promoting those who transpire to be self-centred.

THE BLAME GAME

Proud Leaders who naturally prioritise and preen themselves somehow seem to lack the wisdom to appreciate the benefits associated with downplaying compared with bragging, so they continue praising themselves and blaming others for anything which goes wrong, failing to appreciate how counterproductive such behaviour in any group can actually be.

"Blowing your own trumpet" can be too loud and a deterrent, especially when such people may be incapable of receiving an iota of criticism and instead tend to criticise and blame others for their own failings and inadequacies.

Indeed in too many organisations, especially when led by such people, **blame and recrimination** can be more evident than co-operation and progress.

One long-standing public sector employee remarked of his organisation: *"you are remembered as that person who took that bad decision"*. With promotional opportunities diminished and indeed denied to those blamed for mistakes, such a culture led to committees being formed to avoid personal accountability and decision making responsibility and spread the risk of recrimination should any decisions backfire. Courageous, ground-breaking decisions became rarer and progress was modest. Not risking *'upsetting the apple cart'* became the norm and the long standing status quo was comfortably maintained.

But what does blame really achieve? Which is more important - apportioning blame or making progress by learning for the future from prior mistakes?

Astute leaders know that in such environments, the negativity associated with blame can be an all-too-easy response, so they do their best to avoid playing the blame game, especially in public rather than tactfully behind closed doors.

Public praise and private criticism, practiced by the better managers, can work wonders while *public criticism and little or no praise* only satisfies the ego of those who should never have been chosen to manage or lead others in the first place.

In stark contrast to "blame cultures", evident in both public and private sectors, remaining positive and providing encouragement when a problem arises can be much more difficult, but far more effective for morale building. Encouragement rather than blame may be the opposite of what people expect when mistakes are made - so they are more likely to respond positively and constructively.

Refusing to engage in blame following mistakes can be a sign of strong leadership which people respect in any environment, but especially when negativity and blame are pervasive elements of the prevailing culture.

Refraining from blame can set a strong *'tone at the top'* which can filter down throughout the organisation.

Indeed astute leaders know that the polar opposite of blame - *accepting responsibility for the mistakes of others* - can significantly enhance respect, trust and positive attitudes. Once the original mistakes are not consistently repeated!

Astute leaders have the vision to realise that an organisation needs to be constantly learning and that accountability will always play a critical role in progress.

When the personal pride of leaders is so strong that they take credit for the achievements of others and

apportion blame for failures, does the organisation really learn and make the best possible progress? Anyone can do that and this is what followers expect of weak leaders.

It takes courage to accept responsibility for the mistakes of others and refuse to publicly criticise colleagues. That is not to say strong leaders will not have a quiet word in private with those responsible, mixing whatever critique may be warranted with words of encouragement to learn from the experience. *Public praise and private criticism* enhances trust, respect and indeed loyalty.

While the pride of many leaders drives them to find someone to blame and perhaps rebuke them quite publicly, astute leaders are perhaps the most appreciative that the polar opposite of pride - humility – can be a far more effective attribute of leaders and managers.

Many who have worked with or for both types of managers and leaders would perhaps concur in discussing what makes for successful organisations with the findings of Collins and his team that the most effective leaders are those who *'build enduring greatness through a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will'*, who *'channel their ego needs away from themselves'* and *'attribute success to factors other than themselves, yet when things go poorly, blame themselves and take full responsibility.'*

Such leaders are also far more capable of introducing change to their organisation than those predominantly more interested in themselves than others.

Astute leaders are more than aware not only that change cannot be an imposition but also that lasting change only occurs when people are *inspired* to change. They also recognise that successful change requires everyone understanding both *what* needs to be changed and *why*, as well as *what* they are striving for and *how* they can contribute.

They appreciate that all, not just some, of their people need to understand, appreciate and act out the *core values* of the organisation, which ideally they will have contributed to designing and describing. When core values are most challenged by circumstances, they increase in value and most need to be applied.

When the culture is all about winning at the expense of others, or the interests of a small group are prioritised over the many, when those in charge believe they are right and everyone else wrong, when they are more accustomed to instructing and commanding than listening and reacting, when rules are made which unnecessarily impact adversely on people's lives, when a collective pride prevents apologies being offered or previous mistakes being acknowledged and rectified, when those who care enough to speak up can be vilified, ostracised and silenced rather than appreciated, applauded and respected en route to a change in approach or a beneficial compromise, when the trust of other people is not the number one priority, can anything worthwhile ever be achieved other than just scratch the surface of a *"status quo culture"* which protects *"the way we have always done things"* over a fresh examination of why we actually still do them at all?

A key question which any progressive and flexible organisation might regularly ask of itself is whether a newly established rival would do things "as we do" or prefer to approach many matters quite differently.

Instead of accepting many long-established "status quos" a key practice of a forward-looking organisation would be to challenge their very *purpose* for existing, their "raison d'etre", and be constantly seeking *"a better way to do things"*, with those suggesting improvements praised and rewarded rather than criticised and ostracised.

It is far easier to *propose* that an organisation *change its culture*. It is far easier to *advocate* that some quite worthy values become more apparent. It is far easier to *suggest* a more virtuous approach as a preferable course of action. It is far easier to *recommend* that integrity be more prevalent and evident amongst leaders in society.

But anyone who has tried *doing* any of these things will know that it is much more difficult to *actually change* a long-established culture.

Successfully *implementing as opposed to advocating* more virtuous, efficient or expeditious behaviour or more modern practices is not as easy to practice as preach.

One of the greatest gifts humans possess is our imagination yet we can be so loathe to avail of it, especially in the workplace. It is far easier to criticise those with imagination who want to *"make the world a better*

place” than embrace them.

The world we inhabit is not flat or at the centre of the universe, even if those who once proposed that it wasn't were once criticised by those who perceived they not only had a monopoly on thoughts and ideas but also believed they had the authority to impose these on others without debate or discussion.

Another human asset, or liability to some, is the ability to think for themselves. Organisations which believe they can do this on behalf of their stakeholders have realised that it can be far better to *inspire people to do the right thing* than forbid them from doing something which their conscience may be a better arbiter of.

The fall of communism suggested people cannot be successfully forced to do anything en masse, including change (their “habits”) from ways they have grown comfortable with from familiarity.

People being reluctant to consider let alone embrace change is not a new phenomenon.

Niccolo Machiavelli wrote:

“It should be borne in mind that there is nothing more difficult to arrange, more doubtful of success, and more dangerous to carry through than initiating changes. The innovator makes enemies of all those who prospered under the old order, and only lukewarm support is forthcoming from those who would prosper under the new. Their support is lukewarm... partly because men are generally incredulous, never really trusting new things unless they have tested them by experience.”

Has anything really changed since Machiavelli believed it necessary to write this 500 years ago? *Testing new things* by experience will never happen if the unimaginative priority is preserving a status quo.

Instead of trying to roll back the clock to the way things were before, how can people prioritise “*doing things better*”?

By way of inclusion or exclusion? By request or command? By communication or imposition? By listening or telling? By cooperating or competing? With an open mind or a closed heart? Compassionately or coldly? Optimistically or pessimistically? With humility or pride? By being more interested in others or ourselves? By being accountable or unaccountable?

Groups of people will be more likely to change their mindset, the way they consider and approach their tasks, prefer the new way to reverting back to previous practices, if they trust their colleagues and are sufficiently *inspired* to change, by being *included* in the change process and being persuaded that changing is genuinely in their best interest. A great secret in many organisations is that the people who actually perform the work often know far better ways of “doing things”, but how often are they asked for their opinion by those who take the decisions?

How can individuals and groups of people change, to do more often what they know in their hearts they should be doing - but when most required, don't?

Successfully changing “*the way we have always done things*” does not happen overnight, if at all. Even quite rapid progress is often planned on a “step-by- step” basis, including particularly encouraging those who may see little real need for change.

Those who believe that change is the real evil should perhaps consider their own hearts and motivations and ask themselves what they are so scared of?

The better people and more progressive organisations adapt over time and are more focused on the present and the future, which can be influenced and changed, than the past, which can't.

Could it be that the real evil is only looking to the past?

But change requires flexibility and adaptability and this seems to be beyond some people and organisations who lack the imagination to be aware of their changing environment and adapt accordingly in an appropriate manner.

Sometimes younger staff can possess more imagination than their apparently “wiser and more learned” elders, not unlike the expression “*you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.*”

Change can be a real challenge for more progressive employees when it is senior management who are unimaginative, lack genuine concern for others and a vision of how wonderful their organisation could be is "*hidden from the wise and learned*".

Ultimately though it is not organisations which are progressive or regressive. It is people!

How could those who can only see "the old" and fail to see the possibilities of "the new" ever be described as "*the wise and learned*", especially when their preference is to continue "*sewing new patches on old garments*"?

An organisation which stands still does exactly that - stand still - while others are changing. What may have been appropriate in one era may no longer be in another. Some organisations which fail to recognise this fail to survive, especially when similar organisations are more progressive and adaptable.

When those who care sufficiently for their organisation to want to improve it, yet become so frustrated when their attempts to seek improvements fall on deaf ears that they see little or no other option but to "blow the whistle" externally on poor internal practices or wrongdoing, are viewed by the culture as "disgraceful" parasites for wanting to draw attention to opportunities for improvement and misguided colleagues instead prefer to try to assassinate their characters in private and public, there is clearly something very wrong.

It can take a great deal of courage to stand up and be counted and how such people are responded to can be a measure of the strength of character or weakness and cowardice of managers and leaders.

Such keen and interested people, with an active conscience not yet damaged by the culture, need to be encouraged to draw attention to inadequacies, suggest changes and be included in the team taking rapid steps taken to introduce whatever may be required to make progress.

That is what happens in many *progressive* organisations. It is one of the key elements in their culture and their people take "continuous improvement" for granted as it is so commonplace.

Organisations which discourage suggestions for improvement, especially from more junior people, are *regressive*, often with many layers of management and many overt and covert barriers to progress.

How more unimaginative can an organisation and its leadership be than only wanting to do things as it always did in the past?

How more disrespectful can an organisation and its leadership be than ignoring those who want to improve it?

In stark contrast, the astute leader appreciates the contribution that everyone makes, irrespective of whether they view the person as being useful to them or not, respecting everyone for their unique talents and interests. *Everyone* has their own valuable role to play within an organisation, which often only makes huge strides forward when all involved feel their contribution is appreciated and accordingly feel confident and inspired to produce their best.

The astute leader shows an interest in everyone, irrespective of position or status, with the interest naturally welcomed, appreciated and often reciprocated by not only an interest in the opinions and advice offered by the leader but also the trust of those people the leader displayed an interest in.

People distrust those who appear to show greater respect to those they consider to be important or personally useful. One of the quickest ways to lose respect is to display only modest interest in someone who then witnesses them showing more respect for someone else. Or showing less interest in someone who transpires to be more important than originally thought. By then the damage may already be done.

Surely it is easier and wiser to treat a newcomer with the greatest of respect unless subsequent experience suggests this may not be warranted?

Judging people by their position or current role rather than by their personal qualities and abilities may mean missing out on a real gem. Without sufficient enquiry and interest in the opinions and beliefs of others, good people and useful ideas may lie dormant.

Such a simple act as showing an interest in someone else can have universal benefit and won't just be appreciated by those in junior positions. People in senior positions are often looking out for such qualities in

deciding who to promote. They want people who show evidence that they themselves can provide leadership, as they know that those who are visibly selective with their respect may not themselves be well respected.

A leader who does not command respect is fighting an uphill battle, as is a leader who does not genuinely respect colleagues. Commanding respect and giving respect may be more closely related than some may care to admit.

The astute leader appreciates what motivates people and knows they would rather be inspired to do something positive and constructive than be forbidden from doing something else. Yet many leaders believe leadership involves their laying down the rules which others are required to follow. History would suggest some followers do and others don't.

Astute leaders recognise the superiority of inspiration over instruction and also the importance of kindness and generosity - to everyone.

"Obey" is actually derived from the latin "*to listen to*" and this needs to be a two way process with both parties genuinely listening to the opinions and suggestions of the other with an open mind as well as ear. Without that, progress will be difficult and minds remain closed.

People respond to kindness and generosity in its variety of forms and this breeds respect and loyalty, begs reciprocation and offers the opportunity for happy, trusting relationships. No matter what the walk in life, kindness has a far more positive impact than meanness. So even on the occasions when some criticism may be warranted, displaying a generosity of spirit can be far more productive.

The astute leader appreciates that saying '*well done*' can lift people's spirits and boost morale – particularly if praise isn't totally warranted and may be unexpected – and inspire them to better achieve. If people have genuinely tried their best but not fully achieved, they may still warrant praise and a clap on the back. Astute leaders know they can never ask of others more than they give their all and put their heart and soul into their tasks. But if they fail to fully achieve because they have not tried hard enough, or not sought clarification of the goal if unsure, they can expect criticism.

Mark Twain recognised the benefits arising from generosity of spirit towards others when he remarked that "*I can live for a year on a good compliment*". Yet despite the obvious benefits, some people can find it so difficult to praise others. '*Well done, keep up the good work*' particularly when coming from a boss can so easily *inspire and motivate*, yet for some displaying kindness to others is neither easy nor simple.

There is something wrong when people who are kind to others during their private or family lives are less capable of doing so during their working lives. Perhaps the organisational culture is so difficult and challenging that kindness to others is seen as a form of weakness or the personal ego of the individual or colleagues prefers arrogance and aggression to compassion and humility. But what does this really achieve? Surely harmony and co-operation are more effective than disharmony and excessive competition?

People like doing things for people they like. So treating people fairly and assessing people impartially and objectively is more likely to produce harmony and greater co-operation in a more trustworthy environment.

When people at all levels are encouraged to suggest improvements, organisations evolve and make progress.

Astute managers appreciate that it is often people who perform the daily work who really know "how things are done" and are best equipped to suggest improvements. Environments which encourage them to make their contribution become better places to work and provide higher levels of service. In contrast, when the environment discourages people "in the know" from contributing their ideas, does anyone win at all?

Indeed when leaders believe they need to respond to suggestions or criticisms by "attacking the accuser" rather than embracing and implementing change, they are clearly in the wrong role, for many reasons including setting the wrong "tone at the top" by failing to set an admirable example for their colleagues to follow.

When the organisation lacks adequate internal mechanisms for genuine improvements to be reported, evaluated and rapidly introduced by management open to change, there is clearly something wrong.

When the "customer service" mantra is CAN DO, customers come back for more rather than to the competitors. But when the customer service mantra is CAN'T DO or, even worse, COULD DO BUT

WON'T DO, when IT'S NOT MY JOB prevails over doing that little more to better serve customers, there is clearly something wrong.

People should always feel inspired to better serve customers and in turn achieve higher job satisfaction from doing so. Not be prevented by policies and practices from prioritising the customer and giving them the best possible service.

The most important people in organisations can be those with "frontline" customer service responsibilities. When crunch comes to crunch, many of the other roles may not be required unless they genuinely support those whose task is to service the customer. One simple measure to improve customer service is to move people from more administrative roles which may not be required to more customer service related tasks, especially when this is what is most required.

The organisation which just seeks to employ more people rather than assessing how relevant the roles of its existing people are may be missing out on the opportunity to better match people's talents with their most appropriate role, including those whose current performance is judged to be poor. Some may just be lazy, but others may just be uninspired by not having their talents best utilised. Matching people to their best roles takes perception, imagination and a genuine interest in people.

One of the greatest organisational secrets is that treating people with respect, indeed as people would like to be treated themselves, particularly *including* them rather than *excluding* them, satisfies and inspires them.

Another secret reserved for the better organisations is that "super-serving" the customer (the reason employees have their job) ultimately satisfies both the customer and the employee. But when "*going the extra mile*" is frowned upon rather than applauded, there is clearly something wrong.

But who has the courage to address such matters? And who has the vision to realise the necessity of eradicating many status quo practices which do not support prioritising efficient customer service? Indeed quite the contrary, actively keeping practices which prohibit optimum customer service, extraordinary as this may seem in an organisation entitled "public service".

The better organisations regularly examine "the way we do things" and streamline policies and practices to ensure the customer is best served, which in turn benefits the employees, who achieve satisfaction from better serving their customers rather than being frustrated when they cannot.

The better organisations often "start from scratch" when evaluating processes and roles rather than perpetuating older, failed and no longer appropriate practices. Believe it or not, such dynamic organisations can be much better places to work.

Do those who actively prevent change realise that both they and their colleagues – as well as their customers – could all substantially benefit from doing things differently and better?

There are many failings in the private sector, although many dynamic organisations do inspire people to genuinely co-operate with each other. They also support those who try to transform "the way we do business" to better both their organisational lives and the people the entity was established to serve – their customers - who are often their number one priority.

However when the priority of the organisation is the welfare of management and employees, not the customers. When work practices are designed to suit employees not facilitate optimum customer-service, organisations both in public and private ownership underperform and their people can be unmotivated, uninspired and have to deal with dissatisfied customers. Quite the opposite should be the case.

Customers can receive substantially lower service levels than could be the case if they were genuinely the number one priority and work practices (such as 24 hour utilisation of expensive equipment) catered exclusively for the benefit of the people the organisation was formed to serve – the customers. In competitive marketplaces, customers switch to organisations which better serve them and those less interested in service fail, eventually closing their doors. They have only themselves to blame.

When too many people are employed in one area and too few in another and "never the twain shall meet", organisations both in public and private ownership can underperform and their people can be uninspired, featuring some too stressed from overwork while others learn to expand half a day's work to fill their full day. What appalling mismanagement. Quite the opposite should be the case.

When those who speak up to improve “the way we do things” or denounce wrongdoing are criticised and even intimidated and vilified, sometimes publicly as well as privately, organisations both in public and private ownership can underperform and their people can be uninspired. Quite the opposite should be the case.

When those highly conservative by nature, unlikely to “upset the apple cart”, are promoted and those enthusiastic to make the place much better are not, organisations both in public and private ownership can underperform and many of their people can be uninspired. Quite the opposite should be the case.

When the modestly talented and even poor performers are promoted and the more talented, creative, visionary, dynamic, committed and enthusiastic people are not, organisations both in public and private ownership can underperform and many of their people can be uninspired. Quite the opposite should be the case.

When wrongdoing is protected rather than adequately addressed, organisations both in public and private ownership can underperform and many of their people can be uninspired. Quite the opposite should be the case.

Cover-up should become the dirty word, not change.

ACCOUNTABILITY

One of the most significant criticisms of organisations and their leaders, across all sectors of society, is a failure to be held accountable and accept responsibility for decisions and actions which don't achieve entirely satisfactory outcomes. Astute leaders and indeed many other achievers thrive on both being held accountable themselves and holding colleagues to account. Consequently trust in their leadership develops, which benefits the entire organisation or group.

In stark contrast, untrustworthy leaders who shirk responsibility or blame others damage trust, individual and organisational. The solution is obvious and simple in principle, if not always in practice, because it takes courage:

“Accept responsibility. Be accountable for your actions.”

Astute leaders know that being accountable may require a change in both individual and organisational mindsets and may involve elements of owning up, apologising and putting the good of the organisation before personal welfare or pride. While some will find this difficult, the astute leader knows that the benefits can be significant as colleagues are more likely to follow the lead set by their leaders by also becoming more accountable themselves.

Collective pride in the way an open business collaboratively conducts its affairs is far preferable to the organisation dominated by the personal pride of its leaders or obstinately stuck in the past.

When accepting responsibility becomes the norm, notably when set by *the tone at the top*, the entire organisation's service levels, internal and external, benefit from the enhanced levels of co-operation and trust.

People appreciate honesty and transparency - even if they don't always want to hear the truth! They prefer openness, genuineness and authenticity to lies, deceit and distortion of the facts.

They can also sense any lack of transparency and hidden agendas. This of course is not a recent phenomenon:

'what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive'

was observed by Scott in 1808 (mistakenly attributed to Shakespeare, but not deceptively as he wrote two centuries earlier!).

Irrespective of century or even language, people respect openness over secrecy, which is more likely to weave a web of trust, especially when people are not expecting such transparency.

Astute leaders well appreciate the importance of openness, especially when relayed to those more used to

either having information withheld from them or only being told what others believe they want to hear.

Conveying openness can also involve not tolerating those who engage in lies and deceit. Astute leaders know that being open and honest themselves can transpire to be less effective and even futile if they in turn accept others being dishonest and lacking in transparency.

Setting the correct tone may involve having to “make an example” of those who do not display the required standards of honesty, until the message is learned by everyone involved that the “culture” which is going to prevail in the future is one of more open and truthful communication.

Protecting people who have not been sufficiently open and honest or who have behaved in an intimidatory manner towards colleagues may be one of the greatest mistakes an organisation can make. Such behaviour being tolerated means it is more likely to become part of the culture. When this example is set from the top and people realise openness, honesty and integrity are not priorities, they may be more likely to engage in some form of deceit themselves or not know who to trust or believe.

Evasiveness, spin and deceit may not be that recent a phenomenon as advice from the 19th Century may be just as apt today. Robert Louis Stevenson clearly realised that people engaged in half truths and partial disclosures because he advised:

“Truth of intercourse is something more difficult than to refrain from open lies. It is possible to avoid falsehood and yet not tell the truth... to tell the truth, rightly understood, involves not just stating the true facts, but conveying a true impression”.

Little has perhaps changed because Stevenson wrote 'Truth of Intercourse' in 1879, suggesting that the subject of his essay remains quite a challenge, particularly to those untrustworthy leaders who fail to realise that engaging in 'clever talk' may transpire not to be so clever, because perhaps only when a 'true impression' is conveyed will trust be genuinely enhanced.

So while planning to speak clearly is important, it may be insufficient. Astute leaders know that if they make it their ambition to

“ensure misinterpretation is impossible”

they are far more likely to convey their message with credibility, without ambiguity and accordingly enhance trust.

There are other benefits to being open and accountable, as doing so may not just satisfy the audience, it can also ease the conscience of the speaker, quite the opposite result from covering up.

THE OPPORTUNITY 2022 PRESENTS

The Irish celebrated 1916 in 2016 with aplomb, although 1916 was only the beginning of a process culminating in Independence in 1922.

Maybe we should look on 2016 as having been the same. The beginning of a process of change which will culminate in significant "cultural reform" by January 2022?

Perhaps if we pretended that we have just received our Independence we could actually start totally afresh, as it seems not unlike "zero based budgeting" we need to start fully from scratch and design totally new processes and ways of doing things.

OECD Reports and Troika have made little difference, so why do we not as a nation proud of its innovative and creative people, NOW decide to turn our talents to creating a NEW VISION for our public sector?

Our ambition should be, like TK Whitaker and Séan Lemass did in the 1950s, to set an example for Public Sector organisations internationally by breaking down all barriers to progress, not by tinkering at the edges but by starting from scratch and changing "the way we do things" so substantially and admirably that no organisation in the world can lay claim to doing it better.

We need to give *all* our public sector employees the opportunity to contribute, inspiring them to suggest

visionary ideas outlining how much better the work could be performed, knowing they will be promptly actioned and no longer ignored, allowing them to come to work in a modern organisation which fully supports them providing a world-class service to the public, not detract from them doing so because of many barriers to progress developed over the decades.

And let us not procrastinate. We have the opportunity to transform "the way we do things" in time to *genuinely* have reason to celebrate the anniversary of our Independence in 2022, ensuring

"equal rights and equal opportunities to all our citizens" and a renewed dedication "to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts."

As well as the fine but unachieved ideals of our 1916 proclamation, many fine words have been spoken by Irish people down the centuries which could inspire us to "make our nation a better place to live and work".

For instance, we could also turn for inspiration to many of the fine and apt words of one of our greatest exports, the Irish born and subsequent Westminster parliamentarian, Edmund Burke, who said

"a State without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation" and "nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do only a little."

Perhaps the "mantras" for our "**Project 2022**" endeavour, featuring our well renowned "*spirit of the meitheal*", because it will require substantial yet constructive, collaborative, productive and ultimately fruitful endeavour, as experience with many organisations suggests it can and will inspire and allow rather than prevent and inhibit many of our wonderful public sector employees to "produce their best", could be:

"the status quo is not an option" and "ní neart go cur le chéile".

Let us "dream" of making Ireland a better and fairer place to live and work, then stop at nothing and let no barriers prevent us from turning our dreams into reality.

Unless little people, make a little effort, to make a little difference, nothing changes...

LIVING THE 1916 DREAM IN THE 21st CENTURY

The ideals so admirably described by some of Ireland's "founding fathers" in the 1916 Proclamation have alas not been lived up to, especially in "the way we do business" as a State. But it is not and never will be too late to revisit these, notably:

"The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally."

This century old document in many respects, notably equality of opportunity, was well before its time, even though the same could not now be said about the apparatus of the State it established. Not everyone is treated equally, including some who believe themselves to be above reproach.

Many public sector organisations (at home and abroad) could become far more dynamic workplaces and provide much higher service levels, satisfying both customers and employees alike – if only they were permitted to.

Where are the courageous and selfless visionaries like TK Whitaker when most required?

I have a dream that TK Whitaker would invite Martin Luther King to speak to an assembly of Irish citizens, gathered not around the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC, but in Dublin, around the similar waters of the Garden of Remembrance at Parnell Square.

These could be among their suggestions for the Ireland, Europe and indeed World of today:

1. I have a dream that "transparency, accountability and responsibility" will be accepted as the norm rather than the exception; that wrongdoing will no longer be accepted nor acceptable; those responsible will be held to account - not protected - and those who abuse power, lose power.

2. I have a dream that any culture of silence be replaced by a culture of openness and that honesty and transparency will become commonplace, with silos and secrecy being consigned to history.
3. I have a dream that those who cover-up and sweep wrongdoing "under the carpet" have their lack of integrity exposed and be denied any further opportunity to do so again; I have a dream that no longer will the tone at the top be epitomised by the "*rot setting in from the head to the tail*" and that leaders will set such a shining example of integrity that everyone else will be inspired to follow.
4. I have a dream that integrity will be associated with "*doing the right thing when no-one is looking*" and that "*doing the wrong thing when everyone is looking*" will no longer be accepted and in effect rewarded, rather will be penalised.
5. I have a dream that the antithesis of "*the way we have always done things*" will be found to contribute to a much better, more inspirational, entirely customer responsive and ultimately far healthier work environment for everyone involved.
6. I have a dream that politicians will not have to "*deny the undeniable*" and cover up for poor performance or the unethical or illegal behaviour of "*permanent officials*" who will no longer remain nameless, blameless and unaccountable; wrongdoing is wrongdoing and even more egregious when undertaken by employees of the State, who should not be able to hide behind "official secrecy" nor be afforded or indeed warrant "permanency"; indeed they deserve quite the opposite.
7. I have a dream that no-one will ever have to "*defend the indefensible*" because it will become acceptable to own up to errors and rectify them rather than cover them up; that those who point fingers and blame others will be incentivised to accept responsibility for their errors and suggest how they may best be avoided in future; that everyone involved will learn from the experience and "*the way we do things*" be capable of continually improving, evolving, adapting and responding as a result.
8. I have a dream that women and men, each half the population, be treated equally in every respect and that they and others will no longer be viewed as "*minorities*", with all such differences ignored as matters such as pay, conditions and opportunity for promotion to the most senior positions be decided purely on terms of merit.
9. I have a dream that those who provide leadership will wake up from their collective slumber and smug satisfaction with a clearly unsatisfactory way of providing public services in the 21st century, based on a 19th century culture of *aloof unaccountability and privileged impunity* evident nowhere else in Ireland.
10. I have a dream that those who have become used to driving on cruise control down the single-lane and low-gear *bohereens* of "status quo", "no-one responsible" and "not my job" culminating in the cul-de-sac of "inconclusive enquiries", will choose instead to travel down newly built, multi-lane, high speed, top gear motorways of "accountability", "transparency", "customers-first" and "first-class" service as a result of "best-practice modernity" epitomised by "reinvented workplaces" and "reinvigorated people".
11. I have a dream that no employer will be scared of introducing flexibility and variety which has been prevalent elsewhere for many decades, amongst firms acknowledged to be great places to work, providing prompt, high quality service, resulting in satisfied people encouraged and inspired to produce their best; where good performers are rewarded and shirkers no longer tolerated; featuring minimal absenteeism and non-existent disputes because communication will be open and two-way with everyone inspired and "empowered" to fully cooperate in totally transforming their places of work, without any barriers to making exciting progress and with the mantra "*the status quo is not an option*".
12. I have a dream that the nightmare of poor service, disenchanted and uninspired staff, lack of accountability no matter how many "scandals" arise for similar reasons across different organisations with a similar culture, the wrong people promoted, the best people leaving, cover-ups exposed resulting in enquiries and tribunals, et al, will be deemed to be "*disgraceful*" and no longer tolerated.
13. I have a dream that those with the vision to see the opportunity how to do things better, those who

care sufficiently to want to “*make a difference*”, those with the courage to make a stand for progress and those who criticise antiquated or inappropriate practices, will no longer be attacked, vilified, sidelined and branded as “*disgraceful*”, rather be appreciated, applauded, recognised, respected, rewarded and be encouraged to make their fullest contribution by way of being included in the improvement process without the discouragement of any barriers being placed in their path.

14. I have a dream that “Reports” be written for the purpose of inspiring action and change for the better and that OECD, EU, Auditor and Comptroller General and similar reports will no longer be allowed gather dust on shelves and that doing so will also be accepted to be “disgraceful”, rather will be prioritised and actioned, with penalties being applied when not.
15. I have a dream that strong and selfless performers will be rewarded and incentivised to progress up the levels and no longer be permitted to become disenchanted and contribute a fraction of their potential.
16. I have a dream that those with genuine ability and people management skills, being “givers” *more interested in others than themselves*, be promoted in lieu of the self-centred and become the new breed of managers in all organisations.
17. I have a dream that those who bully and intimidate colleagues be held to account and the self-centred and excessively proud, being “takers” *more interested in themselves than others*, will be seen for what they are and denied promotional opportunities and what they most crave – power.
18. I have a dream that HR or Human Resource Departments will be supportive of managers who refuse to promote non-performers - not castigate them and force them to retire; that pay and reward structures be greatly simplified and antiquated practices no longer in operation elsewhere in society be replaced by more modern and streamlined processes, centred around maximising the provision of customer service.
19. I have a dream that public servants be deemed to work for a single, unified organisation - the “*public service*” - and thus be given the opportunity to seamlessly work in different areas with no barriers to movement, for shorter or longer periods as required; I have a dream that the solution to work pressures not solely be considered to be taking on more people to work in antiquated environments and instead the primary solution, like in many other organisations, to some areas being particularly busy become assistance from elsewhere in “the service”, by having people transferred from quieter areas for as long as necessary, even a few days, not necessarily from the same entity; I have a dream that modern work practices will be so prevalent across “the service” that staff can easily move from one area to another and fit in easily because the practices and culture will be so similar, for the right reasons; that staff gaining experience in a variety of areas will become the norm rather than the exception.
20. I have a dream that “*joined up thinking*” may be the order of the day within “*the service*” with the left hand aware of what the right hand is doing, instead of instances arising such as a multitude of vacant and half-completed properties being sold at a substantial cost and loss to the State to overseas funds and investors, when there was a severe shortage of social housing and too many of our own people homeless; I have a dream that different parts of the same “*public service*” may act as if that is what they are, unified by the *vision* to try something *innovative* when this is what is most needed.
21. I have a dream that those who cite excuses such as “*legal problems*” may, ultimately being the law-makers themselves, change laws which pose barriers to progress and modernisation.
22. I have a dream that those who contribute little will be inspired to contribute a great deal more by way of both greater inclusion in “*what is going on*” and introduction of far more modern work practices, or be assisted, encouraged and guided if they cannot; with the option of being moved to an alternative role within “*the service*” which may better suit their talents, otherwise face the consequences including being demoted to a more appropriate level or allowed leave, like in almost every other organisation in society.
23. I have a dream that those who find their careers stalled will no longer be those who “*want to make a difference*” and seek “*better ways to do things*”, or those who make a mistake once they learn from

the experience, rather those who block reform or contribute little and hope their intransigence or non-contribution will not be noticed.

24. I have a dream that performance reviews be genuine and indicative of particularly good or notably disappointing work; that they adequately reflect what *everyone else knows* about who does and doesn't make a decent contribution; that poor performers receiving good reviews be seen to make a farce of the review system and both parties be held to account; that those who give false reviews appreciate that what they are doing is incentivising the poorer performers and disincentivising the better performers; that those aware of false reviews unreflective of good or bad performance have a forum for alerting other management to this, hence improving the "integrity" of "the system".
25. I have a dream that inadequate performance no longer be accepted or covered up nor poorer performers continue to be protected from the consequences of their own inactivity; that those who do not perform or inspire will *never* be promoted and may instead be capable of being *demoted* to their level of competence or be allowed seek employment elsewhere, as in most other sectors, *doubly incentivising* those who *do* make a significant effort, perform well and contribute positively to the group.
26. I have a dream that the employer being the State means that standards and expectations will be *higher* than *any* other organisations and there be no valid or acceptable reason for them being lower.
27. I have a dream that "*sick leave*" will become a thing of the past and as unnecessary as it is elsewhere in business and society, especially as working environments become happier and healthier; that those who lack integrity and cheat their employer by availing of sick leave inappropriately suffer the consequences of their actions by being allowed seek employment elsewhere.
28. I have a dream that "suggestion boxes" will be overflowing with visionary ideas outlining how much better the work could be performed; that *everyone* will be encouraged to contribute to the reform process, in the *full knowledge* that their ideas and suggestions will be promptly evaluated, actioned and no longer ignored; that those who object to suggestions not be permitted to do so without devising better ones themselves and engaging with those with the original ideas; that not having tried something before not be a valid reason or excuse for trying something new or different.
29. I have a dream that barriers to progress will be eradicated not erected and the "purpose" of each work practice be evaluated; if not positive, constructive and contributing to better service any matters which some may see to be barriers will be eradicated as no longer being appropriate in the 21st Century, to be replaced by simpler measures with a demonstratively positive, constructive and ultimately customer service-oriented purpose.
30. I have a dream that instead of tinkering at the edges and giving the impression of making progress, "*the way we currently and have always done things*" will be ignored as far more appropriate and modern "*ways of doing things*" will be designed "*from the ground up*", especially by those who actually perform the work, whose ideas are too often either not sought or ignored in both public and private sector organisations.
31. I have a dream that "frontline" staff will be allowed design the work practices they believe will result in customers being rapidly and appropriately responded to - so matters such as delays, denials and long waiting lists will become a thing of the past - including 24 hour utilisation of valuable equipment allowing far more timely service, proving that customers, clients or patients are genuinely the number one priority, being the reason the organisation exists.
32. I have a dream that CAN DO not CAN'T DO or WON'T DO will be the primary customer service mantra and IT'S NOT MY JOB will be replaced by WE'LL SEE WHAT WE CAN DO, when appropriate; that work practices will primarily favour customers and "*how do we better serve the customer?*" will replace "*what's in it for me?*" with the only "*sense of entitlement*" being that of the significant service expectations of customers - not rewards for staff whether they make a significant contribution or not.
33. I have a dream that instead of or as well as reinventing the wheel, *best practice* be sought from any organisations and sectors elsewhere in society and these be tailored and applied by those most

appropriate and capable of implementing them, including by "frontline staff" in the manner which best allows them to serve their customers, without exception or barriers.

34. I have a dream that staff will no longer be limited to narrow and limited roles and may be incentivised to learn how to perform a variety of different tasks, both related and unrelated, so as many people as required will be capable of performing whatever the priority of the day may be; that those in positions of authority may appreciate that staff skilled in a variety of tasks will not just make a wider contribution but also derive more job satisfaction from not having to do the same thing all the time.
35. I have a dream that work currently required to be performed by a number of people following each other, with delays inherently built into the process, be instead performed on a more timely basis by *one person* trained to perform all the tasks without any unnecessary delays; that variety, timeliness, job satisfaction and customer service all be improved by taking a "*business process*" perspective including eradicating all unnecessary steps, assisted by availing of modern technology.
36. I have a dream that management information systems support operational staff and supply them with the information they need to make the most astute and appropriate decisions.
37. I have a dream that "*level*" may refer to a level playing field of opportunity and service not the multitude of levels of hierarchy which stymie decision making, responsibility and progress; I have a dream that people only progress to a higher level because their performance warrants it, not because of length of service; I have a dream that the *level of contribution* become better appreciated, including *level of volunteering* for new responsibilities; that those seeking better ways of doing things and volunteering their involvement be more appreciated and those doing neither, not be and hence not progress beyond their current level or move in the opposite direction; that everyone be given the *opportunity* and *inspired* to produce their best and those that do make a significant contribution will be rewarded by progressing up the ranks.
38. I have a dream that "*sitting on the fence*" will be a thing of the past; that instead of committees being formed to delay or avoid making decisions, managers will be empowered to take courageous decisions and everyone allowed to learn from the experience if some do not work out as well as expected.
39. I have a dream that it is not just frontline staff and customers who see their job satisfaction boosted but management also be proud of their achievements as they introduce far better ways of doing things; I have a dream that senior managers share all these "dreams" and particularly that they act as if they are "the Troika" looking in dispassionately from the outside and asking "*how many of our processes would competitors want to replicate?*", if any.
40. I have a dream that managers will be assessed not on size of budget or numbers employed rather how well they have modernised; that judgement be based on how much of the old has been replaced and how measurable service has been improved; how budgets have been under rather than over spent; how imagination and streamlining allows far more to be done with similar resources; on their ability to be constructive and co-operative with how and where the staff are most gainfully deployed within "the service" and visibly making the most significant contribution to satisfying the needs of the moment, wherever they may be.
41. I have a dream that "*underspending the budget*" be incentivised and applauded; that overspending and last minute year-end spending be instead treated as the crime, not underspending; that each spending measure be fully evaluated and justified from scratch rather than just taking the previous budget plus a percentage increase; that recessionary times should set the example and become the mindset for more efficient utilisation of valuable resources during better times too; that a flexible approach to budgets often prepared some time ago allow newer matters which arise to be prioritised ahead of less important matters; with "*that can't be done because it isn't be in the budget*" being replaced by a more imaginative approach to maximise utilisation of available resources without any complacency.
42. I have a dream that workplace cultures will facilitate and promote not prohibit and hinder the personal integrity of employees coming to the fore and that *intolerance of low integrity* by leaders of

- high personal integrity will by setting an admirable “tone at the top” ensure unethical instances are no longer condoned or repeated; I have a dream that lower calibre people including leaders who engage in or cover up wrongdoing and by permitting unethical behaviour go unpunished in effect accept, tolerate and incentivise this to be repeated by the pernicious culture prevalent within their organisation, be held to account for their own lack of integrity and leadership.
43. I have a dream that anyone who chooses to cover up rather than own up and rectify any situation be permitted to seek employment elsewhere.
 44. I have a dream that those who engage in any forms of error and wrongdoing in organisations be held accountable and that instead of some people in society being held to a different level of account than others, or not at all, that everyone be equally accountable no matter the position or role.
 45. I have a dream that any silent and unspoken mantra that because people may be employees of the State they may be above reproach be replaced by a new level of openness and accountability.
 46. I have a dream that society will elect more leaders like the late and great Liverpool FC football/soccer manager Bill Shankly and will set the right “tone at the top” for leaders across society typified when he said: *“Above all, I would like to be remembered as a man who was selfless, who strove and worried so that others could share the glory, and who built up a family of people who could hold their heads up high and say 'We're Liverpool'”* because when leaders show a greater interest in those they are chosen to lead than themselves, greater unity and teamwork often follows.
 47. I have a dream that instead of a future senior public servant having to refer to *“an endemic cover-up culture throughout the entire public sector”* the reference be to *“an endemic accountability culture”*.
 48. I have a dream that the higher up someone is in society and the greater the amount of responsibility, the greater will be the level of accountability and hence trust.
 49. I have a dream that governance in the public sector not only match but exceed the highest standards of any such body internationally and that the Irish State will be seen to be a role model of accountability by every other area of society.
 50. I have a dream that the more self-centred culture built around *“what's in it for me?”* which can prevent rather than seek progress and does not appear to produce a particularly healthy working environment will be replaced by a culture based on co-operation, team-performance and *“what's in it for the customer?”*
 51. I have a dream that in every sector of society, *“excessively combative”* workplaces, whether arising from particularly competitive and money-driven private sector leaders or heavily rules based structures in the public sector, with antagonism built in to management-staff relations, will be seen to serve NOBODY well.
 52. I have a dream that any manager who accepts a workplace culture which fails its employees be instead be inspired to accept the responsibility to transform it; that more leaders will have the vision to realise that an organisation needs to be constantly learning and that accountability will always play a critical role in making trustworthy progress.
 53. I have a dream that situations prioritising and displaying integrity be headline making news.
 54. I have a dream that those who believe that the public neither notice nor care when people appear to “get away with it” will realise that they do; that “getting away with it” no longer be applauded by society and that protecting people be seen to be “the wrong thing” rather than “the right thing”.
 55. I have a dream that more leaders will accept responsibility for decisions and actions which don't achieve entirely satisfactory outcomes.
 56. I have a dream that employees will not be *“remembered as that person who took that bad decision”* with promotional opportunities diminished and denied, rather that people and groups will appreciate that not all outcomes are predictable and people will instead be *encouraged* to learn from mistakes and still consider evaluating and taking, rather than avoiding, adventurous and courageous decisions which could substantially improve or benefit the organisation.

57. I have a dream that committees will be formed to accept rather than avoid accountability and decision making responsibility by way of becoming more associated with changing than adhering to a status quo.
58. I have a dream that '*upsetting the apple cart*' become the norm rather than frowned upon.
59. I have a dream that those who engage in "*public criticism and little or no praise*" will instead appreciate the benefits arising from more visibly practicing "*public praise and private criticism*".
60. I have a dream that those who spread fear rather than respect will appreciate how counterproductive this can be.
61. I have a dream that those who "lay down the law" for others will have the integrity to obey these themselves and only devise rules with a constructive purpose that they will be capable of follow themselves.
62. I have a dream that those who insist on the status quo will have their eyes opened to the benefits of and necessity to change.
63. I have a dream that those who give their respect to those who need or demand it, will instead be more appreciative of and respectful to those who do not seek it for themselves, rather their colleagues and common purpose of their group.
64. I have a dream that leaders who contribute to a '*blame culture*' appreciate it not only produces negativity but also mistrust and disrespect.
65. I have a dream that more leaders will develop trust by thriving on both being held accountable themselves and holding colleagues to account, recognising that shirking responsibility or blaming others damages trust.
66. I have a dream when problems arise leaders will appreciate it is they set the tone which others follow and when this is predominantly constructive and positive this can be far more effective for morale building.
67. I have a dream that those who engage in half truths and partial disclosures will appreciate like Robert Louis Stevenson in 1879 that "*telling the truth, rightly understood, involves not just stating the true facts, but conveying a true impression*".
68. I have a dream that leaders will communicate so clearly and openly that they will "*ensure misinterpretation is impossible*".
69. I have a dream that leaders will appreciate that the benefits arising from communicating openly and being fully accountable may not just satisfy their stakeholders but can also ease the conscience of the communicator too, quite the opposite result from the "own goal" associated with covering up.
70. I have a dream that society will elect more leaders who greatly respect others and command it amongst their peers by way of their astute words, actions, behaviour and decisions, and not those who demand respect but deny it to others.
71. I have a dream that society will elect leaders who speak well of others rather than of themselves, more capable of being loyal rather than disloyal, not those only capable of being loyal to themselves.
72. I have a dream that society will elect leaders who will accept responsibility for personal or group failings, will never "deny the undeniable" and hence damage trust, as opposed to those who can deny matters which others know to be true and yet seem to genuinely believe their own perception.
73. I have a dream that society will elect leaders who will appreciate the importance of compromise, rather than those for whom the importance of "*getting their own way*" is such that they find it almost impossible to compromise or enter into measures which may result in mutual resolution and satisfaction; I have a dream that society will elect leaders who much prefer outcomes which are win-win rather than win-lose.
74. I have a dream that society will elect leaders more positive by nature rather than those capable of only seeing see the downside in many situations, even if predominantly positive.

75. I have a dream that if Emotional Intelligence is “*the ability to identify and manage your own emotions and the emotions of others*” and astute leaders make “*intelligent use of their emotions in managing themselves and working with others to be effective at work*”, that those who are only capable of seeing things from their own-self centred perspective and who have proven to be incapable of managing their own emotions let alone those of others will NEVER be deemed to be capable of leading other people.
76. I have a dream that society will elect leaders who thrive on *praising and encouraging others*; not those who so seek admiration for themselves that when others are not praising them, they will praise themselves, especially in public, not being able to resist bragging conceitedly to anyone about their exceptional talents; the kind of people who society believe will make great leaders – until they appoint them.
77. I have a dream that society will elect leaders who thrive on showing *gratitude* to others for their efforts and achievements, boosting their confidence and performance and that of their colleagues, rather than those who need to receive gratitude in abundance, rarely praise others, nor express gratitude, and when praise of others may be most warranted, may even say nothing at all or find reason to criticise them instead; the kind of people who society believe will make great leaders – until they appoint them.
78. I have a dream that society will not elect those who dislike praising others yet can flatter people with false praise, notably when this suits them *getting what they want* by way of using the other person; that when they do offer false or insincere praise other people will be suspicious and consider what they may actually want, perhaps performing some act for them or seeking praise in return; the kind of people who society believe will make great leaders – until they appoint them.
79. I have a dream that society will evaluate whether a “successfully-led” organisation could possibly be one where people dislike coming to work and can't wait to get home in the evening, where they experience unnecessary competition and conflict, feel discouraged, disrespected and perhaps intimidated? Or is a “successfully-led” organisation one where they look forward to working when not there and go home invigorated, having spent a productive and collaborative day and felt their contribution was both encouraged and respected? Led by people with high *Emotional Intelligence*?
80. I have a dream that society will appreciate and elect more leaders with *Emotional Intelligence* who naturally display many competencies including trustworthiness, conscientiousness, adaptability, innovation, commitment, initiative, optimism, empathy, self-awareness, emotional awareness, self-confidence, self-control, a service orientation, political awareness, social skills, influence, communication, conflict management, being open to change, a capacity to build relationships, collaborate and cooperate and not only work in but also build teams.
81. I have a dream that society will elect more leaders who are at the opposite end of a spectrum from the most self-centred, being more naturally selfless, pleasant, kind, generous, modest, humble and agreeable people, memorable for many positive and life-affirming reasons, whose generally positive behaviour and attitude to life contributes to an environment or culture whereby their colleagues look forward to coming in to work and feel inspired to produce their best.
82. I have a dream that leaders who give credit where due, who encourage, praise and regularly use the six key words of management and four magic phrases (*please, thank you, well done and sorry*), who show a genuine interest in other people, who recognise and reward those of their people at all levels who have performed well, and who keep their promises (especially when more opportune not to do so) will gain the respect of their colleagues and inspire them not only by their words but also the example they set for them to follow.
83. I have a dream that leaders will ask their colleagues to evaluate the impact of what they perceive to be the *values of the organisation* on their *personal values* by way of questions such as these: “What are the values of this organisation? Have your values improved or disimproved because of your involvement with this organisation? Do your personal values get an opportunity for full expression in this organisation? Do the corporate values take priority? Do the values of this organisation '*distort your own*'? Do you believe you have any choice in the matter? Or are corporate and personal values

in alignment?”

84. I have a dream that organisations will elect leaders such as those researched by Jim Collins in “Good to Great” who “build enduring greatness through a *paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will*”, who also ‘channel their ego needs away from themselves and into the larger goal of building a great company, who do possess ego and self-interest and are incredibly ambitious, but their ambition is first and foremost for the institution, not themselves... who are resolved to do whatever it takes to make the company great, no matter how big or hard the decisions... who attribute success to factors other than themselves, yet when things go poorly, blame themselves and take full responsibility... who display a compelling modesty, are self-effacing and understated.”
85. I have a dream that organisations will NOT elect leaders “with gargantuan personal egos that contribute to the demise or continued mediocrity of the company”; the kind of people who instead of setting up “their successors for success in the next generation”, could potentially prefer to “set up their successors for failure”, hence being seen to have been even more extraordinary leaders after they had left their role, at least in their own mind, no matter what havoc they had left behind.
86. I have a dream that more organisations throughout society will appreciate that those more likely to “channel their ego needs away from others and into themselves” rather than “away from themselves and into others”, are less likely to share in the larger goal of building a great organisation so should NEVER be chosen to be managers or leaders, no matter how apt or appealing their other qualities may initially appear to be.
87. I have a dream that society will appreciate that when a group is intimidated into only doing what the dominant leader wants, it is unlikely to evolve, especially when “getting their own way” is very important to the leader; that when people are too scared to “speak up” and too uninspired to suggest a variety of alternative ideas or courses of action, that progress let alone visionary progress will be highly unlikely and society should instead elect managers and leaders capable of seeking the best ideas from everyone involved and hence produce more progressive outcomes.
88. I have a dream that the only “barriers” to progress which will be permitted will be those preventing a return to “the way we used to do things” - which will become a distant memory.
89. I have a dream that with Irish people being well known internationally for their creativity, imagination and innovation, as well as being industrious and friendly, that such talents may be afforded full expression in all sectors of society, public and private; that with the Irish not generally known internationally for being conservative and unimaginative, this no longer be the perception from inside and outside our Public Sector which will in due course be seen to reflect the fullest creativity of the Irish people by fully embracing continuous improvement and becoming a world-class role model for modern work practices and a positive, inclusive culture.
90. I have a dream that politicians will be incentivised to consistently co-operate to prioritise the “long-term national interest” over that of “local” matters”, “interest groups” and “short-term electoral popularity”; I have a dream that just like investors in corporations expect to have its performance explained to them, that governments will appreciate the importance of openly and honestly explaining their decisions to the people who elect them to run their country, not their constituency, including explaining the state of the national finances, preferably availing of analogies and graphs, so the people will better understand what they are doing and why; I have a dream that the electorate will consequently vote for those who prioritise “doing the right thing” by the nation or region, especially if unpopular, rather than “what’s in it for me?”.
91. I have a dream that the one area of society most akin to a kindergarten will no longer be parliaments; that for this to be achieved political parties will be more respectful of each other and cognisant of the constructive opinions of individual parliamentarians with particular experience of or interest in a matter; that parliamentarians will be capable of agreeing more often and only disagreeing with each other when they genuinely disagree; that politicians in government will be more constructively supportive of opposition input and more capable of including suggestions with which they agree; that politicians not in government will be more capable of being constructively supportive of government policies with which they generally agree and which they could have

- introduced themselves, rather than just opposing for the sake of opposing (anyone can do that) which contributes to a lack of respect; I have a dream that more parliamentarians will appreciate that many citizens want all of them to use their position of influence in society in a constructive and selfless not destructive and self-centred manner, and that they expect them to behave, deliberate, co-operate and disagree in a constructive, adult manner only capable of building trust in the political and parliamentary process.
92. I have a dream that when mistakes are made by public or private bodies with serious implications such as the medical health of infants or adults, it will become acceptable for people aware or responsible to apologise, accept responsibility and a process exist to make amends; that denying responsibility and forcing the innocent to revert to the justice system for a delayed remedy will be seen as unnecessarily extending, continuing and compounding their misery and not a methodology associated with best practice and integrity.
 93. I have a dream that those who do not currently contribute to society but could be capable of doing so are no longer incentivised by an unemployment system to opt out; I have a dream that instead people be inspired to use their talents to make a fair contribution and boost their own self-esteem in the process; that like antiquated work practices which built up over time, the social welfare system which cost the Irish State around €20bn pa even during the height of the “Celtic Tiger” will be reevaluated as if it were being established from scratch, with the “purpose” of each measure being fully assessed rather than “tacked on” to old measures on a haphazard and piecemeal basis; I have a dream that “full employment” actually means full employment and everyone in the State will receive sufficient education and training to better prepared them for the workplace; that they be incentivised to complete secondary education and be better equipped for the rest of their careers.
 94. I have a dream that Tribunals and Enquiries will be expeditious, be given authority to apportion guilt and apply penalties including to those who chose to “cover-up”, with their findings fully admissible in a Court of Law; that in due course Enquiries be no longer necessary because before people act and take bad decisions they will assume the matter will become public, as it often does, and will first evaluate every situation by *always* considering the simple ten word advice of Blanchard & Peale: *“THERE IS NO RIGHT WAY TO DO A WRONG THING”*.
 95. I have a dream that people will be made leaders because they have a vision for a new, improved, innovative and revitalised public sector, the courage to make it happen and the leadership skills to ensure that everyone else is sufficiently inspired to share these goals and strongly contribute to actually making it happen, not for adhering to the long established, antiquated and discredited status quo, which lost its relevance elsewhere in society a half century ago and ultimately benefits nobody.
 96. I have a dream that everyone in every organisation of the State and elsewhere cannot wait to get to work because the environment will be so fair, inclusive, empowering and pro-active that they genuinely feel so enthused and inspired to produce their best that their lives and those of their customers will be enriched and fulfilled.
 97. I have a dream that society will elect more leaders who are *“GIVERS” more interested in others than themselves* rather than the more typical *“TAKERS” more interested in themselves than others*, capable of *pretending* to be interested in both other people and the organisation, but secretly and covertly only actually interested in themselves, with their greatest talent being acting and hiding these and related traits from others, with “GIVERS” far more likely to be capable of inspiring colleagues to produce their best and “TAKERS” showing such a great de-motivational prowess that others are more likely to perform nearer their worst and even consider treating people as badly as their leader does.
 98. I have a dream that everyone in every organisation will be fully accountable for their actions because they will always remember *“there is no right way to do a wrong thing”* and will avoid all decisions and actions which may risk damaging those critically important factors - trust and reputation.
 99. I have a dream that the quality of leadership with integrity which so many people in Ireland from a diversity of backgrounds quietly display on a daily basis in their own organisations, inspire those in

more exalted positions to follow the example they so admirably set, without seeking acclaim.

100. I have a dream that group welfare prevails over personal gain, service prevails over pursuit of power, humility prevails over pretentiousness and pride, kindness prevails over aggression and over-assertiveness, calmness prevails over anger, consideration for others prevails over egotism and self-importance, guidance prevails over manipulation, activity prevails over pontification, kindness prevails over greed, vision prevails over narrow-mindedness, listening over talking, openness over secrecy, sensitivity over insensitivity and apathy, considerate words over cruel, an open mind over a closed one, owning up over covering up, admission over bluffing, honesty over deceit, rectitude over dishonesty, candidness over collusion, openness over connivance and complicity, veracity over falsehood, credibility over improbability, reliability over implausibility, fact over fiction, politeness over rudeness, modesty over arrogance, tact over indiscretion, praise over criticism, giving credit over taking it, apology over blame, ideas over silence, respect over disrespect, dedication over disinterest, loyalty over disloyalty, fidelity over treachery, maintaining confidences over rumor-mongering, courageous decision making over popularity, action over words, quality over excessive speed yet decisiveness over indecision and delay, macro over micro, allegiance over enmity, legality over illegality, integrity over legality, confidence over fear, harmony over disquiet, stability over uncertainty, reassurance over insecurity, forgiveness over retribution, like over dislike, progress over the status quo, discipline over indiscipline, planning over shortcuts, endeavor over laziness, encouragement over discouragement, inclusion over exclusion, support over back-stabbing, organisation over fiefdoms, the team over the individual, consistency over unreliability, collaboration over being unco-operative, co-operation over conflict, agreement over dissent, allegiance over sedition, optimism over pessimism, motivation over disinterest, adventure over unnecessary caution, reflection over excessive haste, personal values over corporate, people over wealth, patience over impulsiveness, understanding over suspicion, proactivity over inactivity, long term success over short term opportunism, reputation over risk and trust over mistrust, with the aim that more people are motivated by giving than taking, that those who derive greater satisfaction from contributing to the group and encouraging others to do so will be favoured and promoted over those whose expectations are centered around what they can extract for themselves rather than offer, that breakdowns in trust will be less frequent occurrences because all involved will more regularly consider one simple question before they act: "*would you do business with someone you don't trust?*"

MAKING IT HAPPEN

Experience with many organisations in many sectors suggests ALL these dreams AND MORE are realisable. Imaginative people familiar with their own work situation, enthused by the opportunity to "do what we do better" will be able to suggest a multitude of ideas for improvement and derive extraordinary satisfaction from being empowered to introduce better ways of doing things. Sometimes these may be the informal practices which people have just introduced on their own initiative because they "made sense" to do so.

At the end of the day what is most required in such circumstances is - common sense - although this is alas not as common as it should be.

For too many public service workers, and others working in either old-fashioned or even intimidatory environments, of which there are too many, their working life is a "nightmare" because it falls far short of inspiring them to produce their best and the many who perform more than admirably do so not because of the culture they operate in, in fact despite it, rather because of the truly wonderful and often selfless people they are. They deserve better.

As do those customers they are prevented from better servicing because of archaic ways of doing things which have not been a feature of many other work environments for many decades, perhaps half a century, featuring no absenteeism and only occasional and genuine sick leave (for health not work-related reasons)

because, by and large, people look forward to coming in to work over which they believe they have some influence and control and feel they are making a decent contribution which is often - but not always - well appreciated.

For too many recipients of public services their experience can be a "nightmare" because over many decades the "way we do things" developed not to prioritise serving them but to ensure more people were employed, jobs were protected whether people performed well or not, on terms so complicated that additional tasks warranted extra payment and decision-making authority was centred around people at the top of the tree who were more incentivised to avoid than take courageous decisions. No wonder service standards vary so much and little seems to have changed since Independence with "the system" seemingly stuck in a 1950s time-warp.

The "status quo" prevails, customer service suffers and welfare of workers - which the culture apparently prioritises although it resulted in absenteeism and disgruntlement because of the "elephant in the room" which is that significant progress is near impossible because of the "antiquated culture" and the fear of upsetting those who protect "the way we have always done things".

In most organisations management make the decisions and staff implement them, greatly facilitated by staff involvement and inclusion in the decision-making process. In very few organisations do staff get the opportunity to *veto* the improvements which management believe to be necessary and in even fewer do they get the chance to *vote* whether they want to implement changes from the status quo or not.

Management and staff in many other organisations and sectors would view such a scenario as *bizarre*, as their experience tells them that better ways of doing things often makes for more interesting and varied jobs and more satisfied customers.

Preventing progress denies employees the opportunity to make their working lives more interesting with "serving the customer" often not on the agenda as "negotiations" are held any time something needs to be changed.

Employee representative bodies were formed over a century ago especially when factory workers were particularly severely maltreated, as they still can be in Asia and elsewhere, and they are still very much required in such situations. But when they argue against any changes and seek pay increases for anything different, they may actually be contributing to a disgruntled workforce forced to do the same thing day in day out in an environment which has little changed for decades.

There is something wrong when culture and practices not only fail to inspire people to produce their best but may also contribute to boredom, monotony and a far less emotionally healthy workplace. This can happen when barriers to progress are erected and become institutionalised. Employee welfare, instead of being enhanced, can be negatively impacted.

There is also something wrong when people can be more incentivised to be uncooperative than collaborative. This can also happen when barriers to progress are erected and become institutionalised, preventing employees becoming more engaged in what is going on and included in "making it better", more interesting, perhaps even exciting, especially when "the way we do things" is continuously evolving and "the status quo is not an option".

Cooperation and collaboration beats competition and conflict any day, making for far happier workers and workplaces, although for some organisations this remains a closely guarded secret. More dynamic environments can bring out the best in people, even if their real talents have been long dormant.

Extraordinarily, the opposite more self-centred culture built around "what's in it for me?" and preventing rather than seeking progress does not appear to produce a particularly healthy working environment. In every sector of society, *excessively combative* workplaces, whether due to particularly competitive and money-driven bosses in the private sector or heavily rules based structures in the public sector with antagonism built in to management-staff relations serve NOBODY well.

Experience suggests that both scenarios are highly counter-productive. Neither ultra-competitive, self-centred private sector bosses nor antagonistic, antiquated public sector cultures inspire people to produce their best, often quite the opposite. People do as little as they can get away with and can't wait to go home from a working day that drags and seems to last forever.

People respond best to encouragement and inclusion than discouragement and exclusion so these need to be built into "the way we do things" rather than "what's in it for me" and sometimes "how can we get away with doing as little as possible for as much as possible?" Just like myopic private sector bosses fail to see that their intimidatory and empathy-less personalities scare employees, myopic public sector "can't and won't do" practices can be just as discouraging.

No-one wins in such a scenario either.

What other sector of society has so many employees out on long-term sick leave and so many who have "retired on the job" well before retirement age? Something needs to be done if workers are to be re-energized and enthused, recipients of the services be far better and more timely served and scandals, enquiries, denials and cover-ups not continue on a far too regular basis, irrespective of which parties happen to inhabit the houses of the Oireachtas.

We were proud of 1916 in 2016 but no-one should be proud of the way our "public service" is constituted, little changed from that era with barrier to progress added to barrier every subsequent decade.

These need to be dismantled not piece by piece but rather by starting from the beginning again both by prioritising the customer and working back from how best to serve them and also seeing how the most modern firms work, typified by effective and highly flexible work practices with few "levels" of management and very simple practices based not on a mantra of "can't do" but "how can we do better?"

Employees can be far happier when they see their customers so incredibly well served that they want to come back for more and highly recommend rather than criticise their "customer experience".

In stark contrast to this long standing status quo, experience with many progressive organisations in many other sectors of commerce with a culture the total antithesis of this suggests that people can be inspired to produce their best and often do when variety, flexibility, inclusion, cooperation, harmony, open communication, praise and encouragement are part of the daily routine, centred not around how much or little the employees do but how best the customers can be served. The reason the organisation exists.

So "dreams" such as these and many, many, more are all well achievable and are commonplace in better and more dynamic organisations elsewhere. Once the will is there to turn the dreams into reality.

"It's not my job" and "what's in it for me?" should become "what does the customer want?" and "how can I and we do things much better?" and not be hindered in any shape or form from ensuring substantial progress is made, with those creating or maintaining barriers becoming the people justifiably ostracised, not those unfairly criticised, rebuked and even sidelined for just wanting to make their workplaces better and ultimately far healthier for everyone involved.

Every policy and practice which does not maximise the most apt, efficient and pro-active customer service should become a thing of the past as processes are vastly simplified and customers particularly notice the difference, being served by a reinvigorated workforce inspired to produce their best on a daily basis, with far more people involved in customer service roles than "administration", no longer hiding away in offices and avoiding decisions.

One of the key business process questions will be "which of our processes would a competitor starting up today want to replicate?" All others have served their day. Indeed it could well be "the way our competitors do things" which may need to be replicated and improved instead.

But first we have to wake up from our collective slumber and smug satisfaction with a clearly unsatisfactory way of providing public services in the 21st century based on a 19th century culture of *aloof unaccountability and privileged impunity* evident nowhere else in Ireland.

Once the arrogance associated with "we know better" is replaced by the humility to recognise that the culture prevalent in our (and other nation's) public sector has failed not only the public it is tasked with serving but also its own employees.

IRELAND AS A TRULY MODERN, DEMOCRATIC AND INDEPENDENT STATE

All of these matters and many, many more need to be eradicated and, surprise, surprise, when the opposites are found to contribute to a better, more inspirational, more customer responsive and ultimately far healthier work environment for everyone involved, "continuous improvement" whereby everyone feels encouraged and included rather than excluded and discouraged will become the new "status quo" whereby those who feel inspired to "make a difference" feel there is nothing to prevent them doing so and "suggestion boxes" headed both "*the status quo is not an option*" and "*ní neart go cur le chéile*" are overflowing with visionary ideas outlining how much better the work could be performed, knowing they will be promptly actioned and no longer ignored.

In due course, the only "barriers" permitted should be those preventing a return to "the way we used do things" based on antiquated practices and policies inherited from former colonial rulers which became redundant elsewhere in society around half a century ago.

Then and only then may Ireland be regarded as a modern, democratic and truly independent State.

The alternative is not worth considering, of allowing history keep repeating itself, time and time again, enquiry after futile enquiry, cover-up after cover-up, denial after denial, no matter what the organisation or department, with casualties including trust, reputation, integrity, professionalism, truth, transparency, customer service and ultimately justice because no-one was ever responsible for any wrongdoing and nothing was ever done to prevent its recurrence.

Yet such scenarios have been well analysed ad nauseum throughout the decades in the print media and discussed in "Scannal", "Morning Ireland", "Today Tonight", "Prime Time", "Tonight", "Breakfast" et al and look like they will continue for ever and ever being detailed by whatever these programmes evolve into because NOTHING HAS CHANGED and no-one in authority has had the vision to see what the real root cause and elephant-in-the-room is and courage to say "enough is enough".

The only "cover-up" such programmes should be discussing in the future should be the filling in of the grave which needs to be dug to bury antiquated work practices and a discredited public sector "culture" which has so evidently failed the Irish nation and it's people. It really is "Question Time" for this Irish State. When cover-up is preferred to owning-up and saving women's lives we really are at a crossroads. Yet again no-one has owned up to or accepted responsibility for serious ethical failings in the administration of the nation.

The signposts seem to offer a choice between continuing down the nightmarishly familiar single-lane and low-gear *bohoreens* of "status quo", "no-one responsible" and "not my job" culminating in the cul-de-sac of "inconclusive enquiries" or living out dreams by choosing instead to travel down newly built, multi-lane, high speed, top gear motorways of "accountability", "transparency", "customer-service-first" and "first-class" service as a result of "best-practice modernity" epitomised by "reinvented workplaces" and "reinvigorated people".

Ireland no longer needs to be spending its time filling in potholes only after (entirely predictable) accidents arise, decade after decade, no matter who is in the Dáil, leaving the beleaguered parliamentarians having to make excuses for the inexcusable and time after time erecting crash-site roadsigns entitled "deny the undeniable" and "defend the indefensible".

Yet nobody is fooled and nothing changes.

The Irish Nation in recent years has proved to be capable of being as innovative as its people display both at home and working in many nations overseas, but one significant ACHILES HEEL means no matter what progress is made on other fronts, it will never do anything but hobble along with a significant limp.

Until Ireland stops turning a blind eye to the continuing failings of its Public Sector, for which no-one is ever responsible, and has radically transformed its operational capability by introducing fully modern work practices and completely changed the antiquated and dysfunctional "culture", it is incapable and undeserving of being perceived as either a "modern" or "Independent State".

VISION, COURAGE AND INTEGRITY

With vision and courage we should rather be pre-empting and avoiding accidents by building from scratch modern, high-speed, work practices which every international organisation could be proud of and ensure integrity is at the core of all decisions by avoiding doing anything which may risk damaging trust or reputation, personal or organisational.

Indeed such modern organisations are already here, attracted by IDA Ireland. Why don't we ask them how they would "do things better"? Then do it, with no procrastination, perhaps borrowing some of their people to start the ball rolling and ensure it builds sufficient and timely momentum. People used to modern ways of doing things could guide our public sector bodies along the right path.

Perhaps management of some of those international or indigenous firms could invite some of our public servants to their offices and workplaces and show them "the way we do things"? "Giving something back" to the country which invited them here, employing our people and using Ireland as a base from which to provide often "leading-edge" service in the international arena.

Our public servants could benefit from learning how such "state of the art" organisations work, are organised and managed and hence how different their own policies and procedures may transpire to be.

Change could be quite rapid when they realise how simplicity can be best and how a "business process" centred around service provision can actually provide BOTH better customer service and far healthier and inspirational employee welfare, especially when staff are included in rather than excluded from deciding how best to service customers.

But for this to happen, the most senior, conscientious, committed and visionary decision makers in our public sector, of which there may be many, need to face facts and decide there is little alternative but to substantially rethink "the way we do things" because surely they too are dissatisfied with delays, waiting lists, underperformance, absenteeism, decision avoidance and criticism which they know to be warranted?

Surely they too believe as management they should be permitted to introduce better procedures as they see fit without undue interference?

Surely they too are frustrated that they feel constrained from making progress and instead have to just tinker at the edges?

Surely they are more familiar with the barriers to progress than anyone else and most discouraged that they can seem to be insurmountable?

Surely those who feel forced to have to "cover-up" would far rather the underlying situation was never allowed to arise in the first place?

Surely those most dissatisfied with the "status quo" are our most senior and conscientious public servants, perhaps envious of the freedom which the leadership of Irish based multinationals have in designing their own destiny? Maybe if they visited them they may be encouraged and empowered by the *opportunity* which a modern workplace offers management, staff and ultimately customers?

Surely many public servants already possess the vision, courage, experience and compassion for their colleagues to want to see them more fully utilise their talents in a more co-operative environment, providing the highest level service, free of barriers to progress and unencumbered by tradition?

Surely they do not have to wait for instruction from their political masters to change their work practices and culture?

Surely they can take the initiative of their own volition to seek and implement best-practice and instead of having to field criticism and consider cover-up be applauded globally for they way they totally re-engineered and reinvented the way their organisations provided "public service"?

The longest journey started with a single step, perhaps picking up the phone and asking their counterpart in a modern and efficient organisation could they come and have a coffee with them? For instance, maybe people from our health service could visit some of Jimmy Sheehan's hospitals?

Even more revealing could be their private sector counterparts visiting their public sector offices and comparing notes between the way their respective organisations operate. Progress and change could be quite

rapid with such a natural, human, revealing and constructive starting point, especially when progressive staff at a variety of (too many) levels each get to visit each other's offices.

We have the opportunity to transform "the way we do things" in time to genuinely celebrate the anniversary of our Independence in 2022, ensuring "equal rights and equal opportunities to all our citizens" and a renewed dedication "to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts."

Wouldn't it be wonderful if management and staff in both our public and private sectors collaborated in improving the way our public services are delivered, especially given that any of them could well be recipients of these services? Indeed being a customer of your own service can be very revealing and worth considering.

Suggestions for improvement should also be sought from customers and recipients of public services.

The process may not be as complicated as it may initially seem and it may transpire that those who fear change may find their concerns were without foundation.

In 1933 at his initial inauguration as US President, Franklin D. Roosevelt opened by saying "*So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is...fear itself*" and the rest of his speech may prove to be equally appropriate to the crisis of confidence our public service as currently constituted now faces. The worst aspects of both private and public sector practices and cultures may transpire to be more alike than many may have expected and the criticisms of both prove to be equally warranted.

The status quo is NOT an option and THERE IS NO RIGHT WAY TO DO A WRONG THING.

Before anyone else dies from either covered-up malpractice or boredom on the job, would another courageous visionary like TK Whitaker please stand up, be counted, put the people and their needs first and take responsibility for transforming "the way we do things" and in so doing "make Ireland a far, far better and fairer place to live and work"?

In some respects the challenges have little changed from those prevailing in the 1950s, observed by TK Whitaker as not being purely economic:

"The object was to dispel despondency, to get us to realise here that there were certain things we could do if we set our minds to it."

A return to practicing '*ni neart go cur le cheile*' - or we are not strong until we work together - could be one of the most salutary lessons arising from the aftermath of Ireland's Celtic Tiger period of excess.

No-one can pretend that developing, maintaining or particularly restoring trust is an easy task – whatever the arena or environment. However former US Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson provides apt guidance:

"The chief lesson I have learned in a long life is that the only way to make a man trustworthy is by trusting him and the surest way to make him untrustworthy is to distrust him and show your distrust".

The time is ripe for strong, visionary leadership, lacking self-interest and ego and with integrity and responsibility at the core of deliberations across almost all sectors of Irish society - including politicians, governing and in opposition, public servants, trade union, business, professional, media, voluntary, local and church leaders - to *fully* rather than partially emerge from this home-grown crisis.

Ireland's greatest asset - it's people - who have been treated as second class citizens far too frequently by the narrow mindedness, superiority and ineptitude of their 'leaders', deserve more and demand no less.

A decade ago Ireland suffered a catastrophic failure in cabinet government, public sector oversight and trust, as well as basic business, personal finance and banking common-sense. But not enough has changed during the subsequent years. This young and vibrant country, which all the evidence suggests remains an immature democracy, is now at a crossroads and faces a difficult choice **between the "status quo" or "transformational breakthrough"**.

We have to prioritise progress over propinquity.

Perhaps the mere 999 words below may inspire those with decision-making and law-making authority and responsibility, dissatisfied with a status quo evident for almost a century, which has resulted in far too many

tribunals and enquiries without any significant progress and little real change, to introduce epoch-making cultural reform epitomised by the "*spirit of meitheal*", genuine transparency, accountability and flexibility before Ireland has just reason to celebrate its own centenary of Independence as a State.

The "modern Ireland" and all its people need such a "*terrible beauty*" to be born, as it could and should have been in 1922. We still have the opportunity to do so by 2022 and give ourselves a genuine and plausible reason to celebrate "independence".

Where there is a will, there is a way...

THE CHALLENGE OF LEADERSHIP

A major challenge arises when politicians tasked with *national government* do not see their key role being *national governance*, preferring to prioritise their party, or vested interest groups including the wealthy and the most influential in society.

The role and very purpose of strong and visionary public servants challenging political leaders to 'do the right thing' becomes all the more critical when the politicians themselves lack the vision and courage required to use the 'public purse' to make genuine national progress, *primarily* with the 'public interest' or 'national interest' at heart.

The opposite also applies. Those who perceive 'radical' politicians who desire to make rapid progress as a danger to the security of the status quo, need to question their priorities. Perhaps substantial change is required and if politicians have the vision and courage to say so they need to be supported.

Given the safety first, conservative and 'don't rock the boat' nature of many public service functions, perhaps the idealism and enthusiasm such politicians bring may be harnessed to introduce progressive change as the 'blame culture' which inspires few risks to be taken cannot be used against the public servants who are only 'carrying out orders'.

It can take as much courage to introduce significant change as to stand up to self-serving politicians who do not have the 'national interest' at the heart of their deliberations. *Who guards the guardians at the gates?* Wikipedia describes *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* as being '*commonly cited with regard to the problem of how to ensure that persons entrusted to watch over the interests of the state do so faithfully*'.

When public servants narrowly view their own purpose as merely responding to the demands, requests and whims of politicians, irrespective of their motivation, their role is diminished and so too can be their reputation.

Is their purpose to implement decisions taken by their political masters, or constructively guide them in their deliberations and suggest alternatives with better or more appropriate long term consequences?

If they perceive decisions are being taken predominantly for short term gain including electoral popularity, what should their role be? Acquiescent, subservient and obedient or challenging, dissenting and courageous?

In the private sector it takes courage to suggest to the CEO there may be better courses of action than those proposed. No less so in the public sector.

Like any organisation, *nations need public servants of strong character, vision and integrity*. Those who perceive their priority to be protecting their own position and promotional prospects, not stepping out of line and preferring the safety of the status quo, '*the way things have always been done*', may be surprised to find that quality leaders may actually prefer to promote those who display the courage and integrity to speak up and advocate '*doing the right thing*' irrespective of the personal consequences.

Quis Custodiet Ipsos Custodes?

Presumably we can trust the *guardians* of our State no longer to allow antiquated practices and outdated cultures beyond the *gates* of our soon-to-be fully-accountable public sector bodies.

By the way, I have another dream... That in the near future an employee could switch jobs either way between a modern multinational and *any* public sector organisation - and hardly notice the difference.

Perhaps only when *that* is the "status quo" could Ireland justifiably call itself a fully democratic, truly independent and "best-in-class" Modern State?

With no more unspoken elephants-in-the-room or people hiding away in offices avoiding necessary decisions; with politicians who consistently co-operate to prioritise the long-term national interest over short-term electoral popularity; who openly and honestly explain the reasons why to the people who elect them to run their country, not their constituency; with a modern, efficient, dynamic and accountable public service that ensures they do both while consistently choosing to "do the right thing when no-one is looking"; with a parliamentary opposition who oppose when they disagree and be supportive when they agree; with everyone in every organisation fully accountable for their actions because they will always remember "*there is no right way to do a wrong thing*" and avoid all decisions and actions which may risk damaging those critically important factors - trust and reputation!

Can we do it? Of course we can!

So what is stopping us rolling up our sleeves and starting?

Not tomorrow, today?

Unless little people, make a little effort, to make a little difference, nothing changes...

PS Was it Kissinger who said no report should be more than a page long? So here is a one pager - a 999 call for Ireland to modernise its State apparatus in a mere 999 words!

[999 words - a 999 call to end an Endemic Cover Up Culture and introduce genuine ní neart go cur le chéile” reform - www.eben.ie 180522](http://www.eben.ie)

APPENDIX I: 999 CALL & WORDS: “ENDEMIC COVER UP CULTURE”

A decade ago when discussing integrity in Irish society, a former Secretary General said “there is an endemic cover up culture throughout the entire public sector, with the most important policy and command from the top being “*this must not get out*”. Nothing much seems to have changed.

So whether it is Gardaí or HSE or Departments of Health or Justice, or whichever public body's cover up of wrongdoing is next exposed, the true crime is the lack of accountability and transparency unique to our “public sector”, especially when the innocent lives of those our public “servants” are employed to “serve” are risked and seriously impacted.

Many of the failings of “government” fall at the feet of those “permanent public servants” who have made themselves unaccountable and hence ungovernable by refusing to introduce serious reform. Decade after decade, reports, papers, tribunals and enquiries have resulted in little effective change. Individuals are never held accountable. Decisions which need to be made are avoided by those lacking the courage & integrity to lead by example.

The degree of personal integrity of an organisation’s senior individuals contributes significantly to the prevailing level of corporate integrity, with some cultures *facilitating and promoting* and others *prohibiting and hindering* the personal integrity of employees coming to the fore. *Intolerance* of low integrity by leaders of high personal integrity ensures unethical instances are *not* condoned or repeated, while the *acceptance* of low integrity by lesser leaders ensures instances *are* permitted and hence more likely to be repeated by the culture prevalent within their organisation.

Throughout the history of our State we have had scandal after scandal, enquiry after enquiry, cover up after cover up and presumably more cover ups which have never been publicised, ultimately ensuring that those responsible should not bear responsibility nor be held accountable. Politicians lose office, public servants don't. Why?

Yet those who choose to cover up rather than own up are surprised when their wrongdoing is exposed, especially when they opt to “deny the undeniable”, “blame others” or “attack their accuser”, poor crisis communication policies, rather than assume the matter *will* become public knowledge and take steps to own up and prevent the matter arising again.

“Protecting the status quo” including archaic work practices which fail to inspire State employees to produce their best are prioritised. The opportunity for significant reform was when the Troika of European Commission, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund were leading reform, but the opportunity was lost by instead tinkering at edges and “giving the appearance”, without cultural reform.

It must be frustrating for politicians of all parties who have governed since Independence, accountable to the public at elections, that those they rely on to “do the right thing” do not and yet instead they get the blame, having to “deny the undeniable” and “defend the indefensible” when those who did wrong remain nameless and blameless.

Equally incredible has been the apparent evidence of Ministers themselves being misinformed and excluded from what is really going on, practices that would result in loss of employment elsewhere in society. The real blame for which *all* our politicians should be held collectively accountable is the perpetuation of a status quo little changed since Independence.

Our State and democracy fails when wrongdoing is supported by being unaddressed. Misconduct should never be accepted, nor wrongdoers and cover-up *protected*, while those who seek reform can be discouraged and vilified.

Perhaps by the centenary of Independence we should have undertaken a thorough “root and branch” cultural reform of our entire public and semi-state sector, built around *rewards* only for significant and visible performance and *penalties* including loss of tenure for poor performance and wrongdoing, like many other

organisations in society where those who do wrong do not expect to be defended or protected from the consequences.

Indeed this could be achieved by a single piece of legislation, enforcing openness, honesty and genuine “answerability”, removing wholly inappropriate protection from the culpable across every non-private sector organisation. Perhaps titled “*Ní neart go cur le chéile*”?

It will take courage to introduce policies to ensure accountability, transparency and responsibility are universally practised not just preached and it become more acceptable to have been seen to err. Of course mistakes will be made. Once lessons are learned and practices visibly and significantly improved as a result. Not repeated, time after time, no matter what the public sector body may be. Serving others not self ultimately reflects well on “mé féin”.

Where is the incentive to perform well when poor and non-performers are protected from being demoted or fired (and can be promoted) and the penalty for malfeasance is “early retirement on full (non-actuarial) pension”?

Many elements of business warrant criticism & require improvement, but at least there are often consequences for low integrity. When an organisation risks loss of trust and reputation, people can opt to go elsewhere and organisations can fail as a result. But not when there is no alternative. When the welfare of employees is prioritised over customers, service suffers. When more employees are added rather than reforming “the way we do things”, nothing changes.

If integrity has been described as “doing the right thing when no-one is looking”, when those we trust to manage our State fail to “do the right thing when everyone is looking”, without any apparent consequences for low integrity, compounded by a lack of accountability, transparency and leadership, a poor example is set which would not be tolerated in any other area of society.

Governing involves leading - not hiding.

“*The status quo is not an option*” not “*endemic cover-up*” needs to prevail if Ireland is to *become* a modern, fair, accountable, dynamic, efficient and democratic State, led by people of uncompromising integrity. Our many wonderful, dedicated public servants should never be scared to speak up, rather deserve to be encouraged to suggest reform and inspired to produce their more than capable best.

Cover-up should become the dirty word, not change.

Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?

APPENDIX II: CHURCH AND STATE

Ireland appeared to have a bright future post Independence in 1922 and had the words of the 1916 Proclamation been enacted, society could have become far more open and fairer than it did. However, despite the creativity of many of its people it became a very conservative and quite unimaginative nation, perhaps more satisfied with being independent of Britain than actually doing something constructive with its independence until the 1950s, having lost too many of its people to emigration because they did not see their future in their country of birth.

“Church and State” became intertwined during a period when “Church” became more associated with its own man-made rules than the true more loving mission of its founder, which was based on a great deal more compassion than that displayed by the Irish church leaders of this period. Despite Christ being highly critical of the Jewish religious leaders of his day, his own church continued to make the same mistakes he appeared to abhor, including in **four** key areas.

1. Ultimately the catholic church made one key error – it believed it could TELL PEOPLE WHAT TO DO AND NOT DO when experience suggests people are more likely to behave well, including changing their established habits, WHEN INSPIRED TO DO SO, especially by both the words and deeds of their leaders,

History would suggest that the authoritarian rule of dictatorships or the attempt to control people's lives under communism have a finite lifespan, yet the church believed it could do what had failed under such regimes.

Why did the church then believe it could TELL PEOPLE how to live their lives? And spread a fear rather than a love of God? Did they not actually believe in the gospel message themselves, often referred to as “good news”? Or was this an abuse of power, providing discouragement rather than encouragement?

Did they make the same mistake of poor leaders who create a workplace culture that is intimidatory rather than welcoming, or leaders who do not believe it is their responsibility to provide the most encouraging and inspirational workplace for their people?

For some there is no more encouraging a story then the “good news” associated with the gospel message, yet when the church could have been building their core message around what children can refer to as “the Jesus story”, they chose instead to spread fear rather than love.

The Old Testament may have associated God with justice and integrity and many other fine qualities, but it was also rooted in fear of a vengeful God. Perhaps Christ was sent to instead deliver the message of God's great love for every single person, described by Augustine as “*God loves each one of us as if there was only one of us to love*”.

One problem created by the church down the centuries is that it continued to spread the notion of fear rather than love, of retribution rather than forgiveness, as if Christ had never frequented life on earth.

Armed with one of the best possible “mission statements” based on an abundance of positive material contained in both older and newer scripture, they chose to often ignore this and spread a message of vengeful retaliation and severe consequences for bad behaviour rather than inspire people to live good lives, being kind to the people they met on life's great journey.

When Julian of Norwich spoke and wrote of love rather than fear around 1400, she was well ahead of her time, yet did so to more rebuke than acclaim. The book she is best known for, believed to be the first book in the English language written by a woman, was even titled *Revelation of Divine Love*, yet its very existence was threatened and handwritten copies were subsequently smuggled from England to France for safekeeping.

Her writing bucked the trend of the day by being more concerned with the positivity of christianity, epitomised by the phrase she is best known for: “...*All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well*”.

Despite her intervention, over 500 years later and less than a generation ago, “the fear of God” was not just put on adults but also children in Ireland. Another burden imposed on people.

Christ, like many respected leaders, realised people respond far better to encouragement and kindness than

fear and payback, yet this did not prevent his successors threatening followers with retribution if they did not “toe the party line”.

Experience with many organisations also suggests that when people are intimidated by fear rather than inspired by something far better, they just about give lip-service or leave if their circumstances permit them to do so. Given that the church for most is a place of worship rather than employment, it should not be surprised when many did choose to leave for other churches or private worship or none at all.

While the christian message is predominantly one of being as kind as possible to other people as often as possible, especially when this may seem to be impossible, those tasked with spreading the christian message instead chose to be unkind to their own people.

Indeed experience with “change management” suggests people cannot be told or forced to change their behaviour, they need to be inspired to both behave well and change.

Two millennia after the christian message commenced, the catholic church was still spreading fear amongst the Irish people and commanding them how they should live their lives, despite having many positive and encouraging words of scripture at their disposal.

History also suggests that those who abuse power, lose power.

2. Christ disliked the hypocrisy of leaders displaying excessive pride, especially arising from the importance of their position, wearing the finest robes and seeking positions of importance in the front row of their synagogues and at the top table at feasts. Instead he advocated humility and, like many respected leaders, he practiced what he preached from beginning to end of his life - born in a stable and laid to rest in a manger, both made for animals, living a spartan life advocating compassion towards all no matter what the circumstances, then dying on a cross like a common criminal.

While the Church he founded has inspired many wonderfully kind and humble followers, it also featured leaders sitting on thrones wearing rings to be kissed by those granted an audience with them, as if they were kings of society rather than the servants which Christ advocated. Too many had a sense of entitlement, believing their privileged role in society granted them special privileges and made them deserving of respect, failing to appreciate that respect is hard-earned and more likely to arise from the humility of service Christ both practiced and preached.

Some with a sense of entitlement abused their position of power, others covered their misdeeds up, failing to appreciate that those who breach the trust of the people any organisation is founded to serve or protect suffer far greater reputational damage when they are eventually found out than had they owned up and dealt with the situation in the accountable manner expected of leaders.

3. Christ disliked the plethora of man-made rules which became “burdens” on the Jewish people of his day and a distraction from the “core message”. He seemed to abhor not only the existence of 600-700 rules, many quite petty and significant impositions on the lives of religious followers, but also the hypocrisy of those who visibly and ostentatiously obeyed the rules but were unkind to people in the process. He preached the exact opposite and on occasions went out of his way to break the rules including what could be done on the “sabbath”, displaying kindness and compassion in the circumstances of the moment.

Did the Church he founded follow his example? No. Dissatisfied with the ten commandments, beatitudes and other elements of scripture as sufficient guidance for living the good lives their founder and prior prophets advocated, its' leaders did precisely the opposite and did just what Christ despised – devising a plethora of rules also capable of being a burden on its followers.

Not only did they invent rules within their own sphere, such as obligatory weekly church attendance and fasting beforehand, but they even did so in areas nothing to do with religious worship. When they deemed to tell their followers how they could and could not “plan their families” they were perhaps “laying down the law” in the most intrusive possible manner in the family life of their followers in a realm well beyond their scope of spiritual guidance.

Their modern rules could also be seen to go against the principles Christ established in areas properly within its remit. When Christ instituted the Eucharist to continue the experience of The Last Supper and open the doors to a personal and loving relationship with each and every one of his followers, he may not have expected how his successors would devise related rules, such as fasting from midnight the night before, subsequently relaxed to an hour beforehand.

Did Christ lay down laws who could and couldn't share in the love of the Eucharist? No, but his Church did, notably that divorcees and those not in a "state of grace" were to be forbidden from participating. With Christ being particularly inclusive, kind and understanding towards the most rejected in society, would he have excluded any group from participating in what could be a joyful and deeply spiritual experience, just because their marriage had failed, no matter what the reason for this may have been?

While Christ epitomised compassion and advocated mercy and forgiveness no matter what the situation, many of the rules laid down by those tasked with leadership of his Church, as well as elements of some of their own behaviour, could not have been more un-compassionate, un-forgiving and hence ultimately un-christian.

Experience with modern organisations suggests that governance based on a multitude of rules is not as successful as that based on far shorter but potentially more inspirational and laudable "Values Statements".

Yet experience with many commercial organisations suggests that what follows giving any group of people a degree of authority will be their laying down rules for the rest of the group to follow, which they will expect to be obeyed.

One feature of some of these man-made rules is that they pose such great difficulty that even some of those who devised them could not follow them all themselves. William Barclay writes:

"The dilemma was that these laws must be kept, but could never be kept. They were both obligatory and impossible. Man was for ever in default. But now in Christ God calls men to realise that they cannot earn, but can only accept in wonder, his rescuing and redeeming love. The minute a man realises that, the tension of life is gone."

The challenge for the catholic church is to consider the "core values" which Christ brought and question how many of the rules and laws they laid down in a prior, more unquestioningly obedient generation, could pass the test of the integrity and justice so frequently mentioned in the Old Testament and the compassion, kindness, tolerance, mercy and forgiveness to everyone no matter what prior wrong they had done, which is such an integral part of New Testament teaching.

The challenge is then to have the courage to only keep those old rules and practices which pass this more stringent test of being truly christian in nature, remove the rest and then only consider new rules which in effect treat everyone in society the same, fairly, irrespective of race or gender or mistakes of the past.

This may require an entirely new cloak rather than just sewing patches on the old. Just as no-one should store new wine in old vessels, "*out with the old and in with the new*" is perhaps the only way an organisation which has suffered such severe trust and reputational damage, not in one region but throughout the world, may send out the message that it has learned from the errors of the past and has become a new, more tolerant and inclusive organisation.

If prior storm damage is to be capable of repair, for the vine to regain its health and grow new branches, those branches which have become weak or broken or almost completely detached need to be nurtured and revitalised in the belief that the vine itself has become healthier. Indeed the vine may need to be transplanted in an entirely new field with brand new roots if it is not to wither and die.

4. Christ disliked those who were selective of whom they associated with, believing themselves to be superior to many, so he set the example of being kind and considerate to everyone he met on life's journey, no matter their perceived role or position in society. The more ostracised they were, the warmer his welcome was for them, especially those who had strayed from living perfect lives. Clearly a difficult act to follow.

The irony observing how the proudest in society operate is that those who they give most respect to, who may even expect or demand to be regarded, often least warrant it. Yet those they can be the most

disrespectful of may be far more deserving of their respect and esteem, being so little concerned for their own esteem and welfare and more interested in that of others.

The belief of the then Jewish leaders in their own superiority contributed to elements of the society of Christ's time favouring, applauding and including some people they deemed to be more important while rejecting and excluding many others, the list of which appeared to be long, although not as long as the list of rules they imposed.

Perhaps that is why Christ advocated precisely the opposite, indeed much of christianity could be seen as advising and advocating the opposite of human nature.

William Barclay ("The Mind of Paul") wrote that:

"Christianity began with one tremendous problem... It was clear that Christianity had a message for the whole world and unless that message was delivered the Church would fail... but was cradled in Judaism... and yet in the eyes of the world it was a Jewish thing and the Jews were the most bitterly hated and hating nation in the ancient world... For the most part the Jews were convinced that the fact they were the chosen nation involved what to them was the equal and opposite fact that all other nations were rejected nations."

While the "sense of entitlement" associated with being the "chosen nation" could have been put to constructive use, instead the feeling of superiority would appear to have contributed to the development of a dislike and even contempt for all other groups:

"At their worst they could say 'The Gentiles were created by God to be fuel for the fires of hell'.... It was even forbidden to give a Gentile mother help in her hour of direst need."

These words are unfortunately not dissimilar to those used not that long ago by catholic priests in Ireland when speaking not only of non-christians but also of fellow christians who did not happen to be catholics. How more unchristian could they have been, although perhaps unsurprising seeing as Christ was critical of the manner in which the religious leaders of his day treated those not of their faith.

Instead Christ preached a more inclusive message of treating everyone in life the same – as well as possible – and not being judgemental. Extraordinarily the catholic church leaders did the opposite, favouring some in society over others and becoming one of the most judgemental organisations in the world, criticising its own believers who did not follow all of the man-made rules they had imposed on them, whether or not they were otherwise leading good, kind, christian lives in the manner by which they treated the people they met in the wide variety of life's situations. Which is what Christ would seem to have preferred and advocated.

Fortunately many of the sisters and priests at the *grass roots* of their organisation throughout the ages were actively following the example set by Christ in their own humble service of everyone they encountered during their various ministries. Indeed it has been they who have set the leadership example in society which some of their own hierarchical leaders didn't. When some of them criticised the status quo and sought reform, rather than being appreciated for their concern, they were vilified, ostracised and even silenced by those in authority who had themselves stepped back from the reforms agreed by the Second Vatican Council a generation or more earlier.

If the time was believed to have been ripe for change then, given what has surfaced in the meantime and the loss of so many followers, even more substantial change is evidently all the more required now.

When catholic clergy in the belief of their own superiority were being openly critical of other members in society, it must have been a horrible time to be a non-catholic in Ireland and so different not only from the truly compassionate nature of christianity but also from the type of nation advocated by the 1916 leaders who aspired to:

"equal rights and equal opportunities to all our citizens" and a renewed dedication "to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts."

These words could indeed have been spoken by Christ, although both his own church and the Irish nation failed to put these into practice as they became more established, with women in particular being denied full equality of opportunity.

More recently discovered documents from around two millennia ago suggest that Mary Magdalen, who along with other women did not desert Christ during his crucifixion nor burial and was first to see him after

his resurrection, may even have been one of Christ's most important and influential *apostles* (a “learner”), one of his inner circle, an apostle to the apostles, perhaps even someone the other *disciples* (a “teacher”, someone tasked with carrying a message) turned to for advice.

Did a pope 500 years later want to discredit Mary Magdalen in a homily based on no evidence as a sinner except that he did not want a woman being perceived as having been a leader of the early christian church, resulting in women playing a more subservient role in the catholic church ever since?

Christ gave women a more important role in his ministry than did the Jewish leaders of his day. Indeed did Christ not say “the last will be first”, “those who exalt themselves will be humbled and those who humble themselves will be exalted” and not only by his words but notably by his deeds *include* those who were most *excluded* by society?

Perhaps christians believing in their own ability to seek and find salvation by themselves, without a church, threatened the role of the church.

Experience with many organisations would particularly suggest that women can make better managers, often better equipped for leadership with far greater natural empathy and far deeper emotional intelligence than men. It could even be argued that an organisation such as the catholic church, built on foundations of kindness and compassion towards everyone in society, could have lost out substantially in many respects, including its own governance, due to its exclusion of women from many roles including management and leadership.

Given that many criticisms of the church are based on the lack of compassion it displayed to those who should have been receiving it in abundance, the ultimate in hypocrisy, this may be one result of the key decisions being made by an exclusively male hierarchy, a status quo evident in very few other significant organisations in global society.

Indeed, when one group in society excludes another, the grounds for the exclusion are always worthy of examination, especially whether they can still be justified. The Old Testament regularly refers to matters such as *justice and integrity* and the church perhaps needs to examine its own governance structures, now in the 21st century, and consider whether they can still be justified based on Old Testament let alone New testament principles of justice, integrity, compassion and exclusion of nobody at all from God's love.

The newly established Irish State made similar mistakes. Some groups in society were more favoured over others. Indeed some who laid down the law seemed to believe and still do that they were also above and unaccountable to it.

While women could have been more fully included in Irish society from the time of Independence, they were not, particularly during a generation when there were many similarities between the way the Church and State were governed.

Their role in the 1916 Rising was diminished, to the extent that it was airbrushed out of photographs. If this was because they were the “fairer” and “gentler” sex, not to be implicated in military matters, this made their subsequent treatment by the State all the more reprehensible. When women married they had to leave the workplace. When they became pregnant out of marriage they and many of their children were treated as second class citizens, the stigma being more important than the ultimate in humanity associated with raising children in a loving environment.

So much for the christian principle of “treating everyone the same” especially “treating others as you would like to be treated yourself” and the 1916 proclamation guaranteeing “*equal rights and equal opportunities to all our citizens*”.

Instead of compassion, both Church and State treated people with cruelty. If the measure of a society is how it treats its women and children, the Ireland of that era failed miserably. Which body was more culpable? Did they collude to discriminate against the most vulnerable? Who has been held to account?

Many of the crimes and misdemeanours of those in positions of authority within both Church and State were covered up, with no penalties imposed on the culpable, other than early and cushy retirement. May they rest in peace, if their conscience allows them to.

Perhaps both Church and State need leaders with an active conscience, capable of actively initiating the radical governance reform both so clearly require, rather than those capable and culpable of “turning a blind eye” not only to the wrongs of the past and present and but also how little both bodies have actually changed

in terms of governance over the last century. Given such an incompetent and irresponsible scenario, had these been commercial organisations, so many of their people would have switched to their competitors that both bodies would probably have been liquidated by now.

Which of course in the case of the Church many have already done, despite the wonderful work of those at the grass roots. Perhaps we will know when State governance and practices have demonstrably improved their practices and service when they no longer fear the introduction of competition in the provision of their services and they no longer have to ask “which of our competitors” would want to replicate the way we do things?

Evident in both organisations has been more wrong perpetrated by those at the top, who have badly let down the many dedicated people working at the grass roots, often giving wonderful service, despite the environment they have to work in, the example of lack of integrity set by their leaders in whom they mistakenly placed their trust and antiquated practices and governance little changed for a century.

The time has come for the three monkeys of “see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil” to be replaced by the three wise principles of Responsibility, Accountability and Transparency, culminating in nothing being done or covered up that may be capable of damaging interpersonal trust or organisational reputation.

But such a change of mindset, culture and environment will take vision and courage, both conspicuous by their absence and a determination to ditch a mutually discredited status quo by way of leading by example, based on admirable core values. True leaders in both organisations, please stand up and be counted.

While Christ advocated strong foundations built on “rock solid” principles, these were subsequently eroded by hypocrisy, pride and superiority, notably favouring some people and groups over others and even being critical of groups other than themselves. Indeed is this any different to Christ's own perception, interpretation, criticism and dislike of the Jewish religious leaders of his day?

The history of actions taken by those in leadership and authority positions within the catholic church, including rule-making which imposed excessive burdens on followers, is of decisions taken as if they were not christians at all and totally unfamiliar with scripture.

It is not just at Easter time that some christians irrespective of denomination say one of their favourite Gospel readings is the experience of the two disciples unknowingly meeting Jesus on the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35):

“Were not our hearts burning within us as he explained the scriptures to us?”

The shame is that it is church leaders themselves, past and present, who appear to need scripture explained to them, given the evidence of their mistaken governance of the body over a billion people trusted them to lead. Indeed their followers would have been justified in expecting that their leadership would have been based on the “core values” established by Christ himself, notably Matthew 5 to 7, including the Beatitudes.

In addition to their rule making related decision-making, the evidence of the low standards some have displayed by way of their own behaviour and flawed decision-making as they mistakenly engaged in and covered up unethical and illegal behaviour, did not set the example and “tone at the top” expected of societal leaders, let alone those whose role includes explaining the difference between right and wrong to others.

Which proves that all decisions-makers need to take a step back from what they are doing and take a “macro level” or “big picture” view of their “micro level” actions and compare these with their organisation's “core values” while reminding themselves as they deliberate that “there is no right way to do a wrong thing”.

The church leaders who either engaged in, covered up or “turned a blind eye” to wrongdoing, appeared not only to be unfamiliar with their own bible but also the implications of scripture for the behaviour which Christ advocated by way of his own life and teaching, especially his parables, and that of the many prophets which preceded him including the good-bad duality of much of their writing which quite clearly explained what constituted acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

Too many decisions in times past made by both Church and State officials and leaders, many themselves catholics, displayed an absence of the “core values” of christianity, notably of being kind, loving, compassionate and forgiving to everyone encountered on life's journey.

Maybe that is why GK Chesterton wrote:

“The christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult and left untried.”

The shame is that the christian ideal has also been found to have been “difficult and left untried” by church leaders themselves.

No wonder so many “followers” have walked away. No wonder the protestant religions were founded at a time when the corruption displayed by the catholic leaders tasked with governance was outrageous.

No wonder the catholic church became more associated with rules while many of the protestant churches became more associated with inspirational preaching of the christian message. At one stage, catholics weren't even encouraged to possess their own bible lest they manage to read and think for themselves. Rather than be told what to do and think by an authoritarian church.

So given the giant crater that it has dug for itself, and its apparent inability to climb out the steep sides, what does the catholic church need to do? Like any organisation which has suffered Trust and Reputational damage for reasons predominantly of its own making, it perhaps needs to revisit and return to its own Core Values, evaluating and dismissing all rules not in keeping with them. Devise a VALUES STATEMENT based on these Core Values and THEN ACT ACCORDINGLY, becoming a far more inclusive organisation, becoming more Christ-like by excluding nobody, while never again believing that everyone else had to obey their own rules except the rule makers, just like the officials and leadership of the Irish State.

Furthermore, when one group in society believes it is right and all others are wrong, this has proven throughout history to be problematic and ultimately be more likely to result in trouble.

When this is exacerbated by one group in society being particularly intolerant of the views, opinions, lifestyle, interests and needs of another, conflict may arise, perhaps inevitably.

It should not be forgotten that the first words spoken by Christ to his apostles after his resurrection were “peace be with you” and this is surely what he would expect from the leaders of his church today, that their policies, practices and decisions would be more tolerant and less dogmatic, bringing nothing but peace and harmony to people's lives, not the conflict, disharmony and exclusion he so despised.

Not everyone who maintains “we are right and you are wrong” can be right.

Human nature is such that when one group in society makes serious mistakes, both of policy and judgement, it can find it very difficult to admit these and change course, especially when governance is conducted by many rather than a few. Yet owning up and changing course, sometimes radically, has contributed to the rescue of organisations which many had believed to have been beyond recovery.

Indeed it is rare for one group to say “we are wrong and you are right” or to show great tolerance for people or groups from a different background or who hold different opinions and beliefs, but that is precisely what Christ himself advocated and he would perhaps expect no less from his own body.

It is also less common that people or groups who have been wronged by others should forgive them their failings and try and move forward in peaceful co-existence. But that too is at the core of the christian message, not the fear and exclusion for so long practiced by the supposedly “catholic” but in reality not very “universal” church.

Although the teachings of Christ appear to be designed to bring peace, understanding, harmony, kindness, compassion and tolerance to situations by way of the “golden rule” of treating others as you would like to be treated yourself, unsurprisingly at the core of many world religions, the practices of the catholic church throughout the centuries, based on the belief of being right and others wrong, have not resulted in peaceful co-existence based on the mantras of mutual respect and tolerance, turning the other cheek, patience and kindness, rather have contributed to schisms, break away groups, persecutions and even wars against catholics, other christians and non-christians alike.

Yet if christian principles were genuinely followed, much of the disharmony in the world between groups of all sizes and even nations could have been and still be avoided. Christ would surely expect that the group which would take a lead in such matters would be the catholic church and set the example for all others in society.

Groups which lay down rules find it difficult to subsequently change them. It takes leaders of vision, courage and integrity to bring about really significant change and reform. When leaders are more like shepherds most interested in finding and caring for the one lost sheep in a hundred, their organisation may become more caring and a healthy place to work. But when the leaders are too far removed from the lives of their people, who they expect will behave like sheep and do what they are told whether the instruction is really in their

best interest or not, people are more likely to disobey or give mere lip-service.

Fortunately the catholic church now has a leader, almost a parish priest for a global parish, who displays more of the servant leadership Christ advocated, showing more compassion for the less fortunate in life and sets an admirable leadership example. His main problem, no different to the “modern” Ireland, is that too many of his lieutenants seem to prefer the long-standing status quo and lack the vision of how good their organisation could be if it were run on the “core values” of christianity itself.

People need to be inspired, not told, how to both behave and change from what they have become accustomed to.

The word holy is derived from *hagios* meaning *different*, so to be holy can be seen to be different, to behave to a different and higher standard. The church itself, meaning its leaders first and foremost, needs to do this, behave to a higher standard. It also needs to show a far greater propensity to change radically from the failures of the past and, in introducing new, more inclusive and tolerant policies and practices, not only become more different, but more holy.

There remain too many similarities in Ireland between the governance of Church and State.

Both entities seem incapable of changing, nor recognising why they have lost “public trust”. Rules made in one era, correctly or incorrectly, not unlike politicians being incapable of being seen to perform a U-turn, are maintained even when no longer as appropriate as they may once have appeared to have been.

One extraordinary observation of the key governance mistakes made by the catholic church is that Christ seems to have predicted every one of them and not only warned against them but also advocated precisely the opposite.

He also predicted the outcome of these errors of judgement: “*what a fall it had*”.

But at least, like all good leaders, he also offered an alternative and a way out, not least “do to no-one what you would not want done to you”.

Quis Custodiet Ipsos Custodes?

CLERICALISM & CENTURION STYLE LEADERSHIP

It is all the more extraordinary that, with so many examples of supreme moral courage shown by such a multitude of their predecessors, notably by Christ himself, some church leaders (not only of today) can refrain from speaking out, refrain from punishing wrongdoers within their own communities, go to great lengths to cover up vile acts and put ‘protecting’ the organisation at large before ‘protecting’ and indeed caring for maltreated members of their flock, while at the same time attacking their accusers, often colleagues who could be vilified for displaying far greater moral courage than their *de jure* leaders.

No different from leaders of the Irish State who preferred to “attack their accusers” and maintain “the status quo” than introduce significant reform.

The irony will not be lost on church leaders that the concerted efforts of those in authority to ‘protect the reputation’ of the organisation they so clearly cherished by engaging in a long standing attempt to cover-up serious wrongdoing, led to an even greater ‘fall from grace’ and devastating loss of *global* organisational reputation when the behaviour and attempts to cover-up subsequently surfaced, as invariably they do when the extent and scale of both wrongdoing and cover-up is as widespread. There may have been a tiny minority involved in the original wrongdoing, but they were spread across many countries and the response was uncannily similar.

No different perhaps to a business scandal in a large corporation, had ‘owning-up’ and ‘facing-up’ been the policy choice, widely recognised by Crisis Communication, Public Relations, Business Ethicists, Management Consultants and many other experts to be one of the first steps in reputation recovery, a significant degree of respect for those with the courage to do so could have resulted.

Instead the exposure of the cover-up policy and practices has made reputation recovery all the more difficult.

Papal encyclicals and pronouncements including those in recent years have set a correct and indeed admirable “tone at the top”, yet trust and reputation do not appear to have notably benefited. Perhaps this is evidence that action speaks far louder than words.

True integrity, involving a ‘whole person’ or group of them, requires intentions, beliefs and actions to be in alignment and confluence... not conflict. Visible action and **demonstrable change** *can* restore trust, but this is highly unlikely in their absence. At this stage, with trust and reputation so severely damaged that experts could almost advise an *organisational name change*, fine words and rhetoric will never be sufficient.

Demonstrable action and quite significant change is also required, not tinkering at the edges. While change management principles involve inclusion of all stakeholders in the change process, it also proposes that significant opponents of change who continue with their objections and preference for “the old way” even when the benefits of “the new way” are well explained, there is often no alternative but to remove them either from managerial positions or indeed the organisation itself, to be replaced by a more dynamic breed of managers capable of taking the organisation forward, sometimes in an entirely new direction.

Christ had great regard for the leadership and other qualities displayed by the Roman Centurion, so perhaps his successors may consider the 'simple' advice of one of the Centurion's own successors, the late General “Stormin’ Norman” Schwarzkopf:

“The truth of the matter is that you always know the right thing to do. The hard part is doing it.”

One of the most salutary lessons from the recent Irish experience is that it is far preferable for Church, State and other leaders to be unpopular for having the courage to take difficult but necessary decisions and the openness and honesty to tell the truth, irrespective of the circumstances, while possessing the humility to acknowledge and tackle the effects of previous errors, than be even more unpopular for lacking the integrity to do so.

Like the Irish nation itself, the Church is now at a major crossroads and faces a difficult choice – Propinquity or Progress?

In the world of business, especially if the recent Irish experience is anything to go by, if the primary motive of those tasked with leadership responsibilities is empire building, ego satisfaction, personal rivalry or indeed whatever else drives their sense of *infallibility*, those that put themselves first are more likely to risk their own wealth and end up penniless. Isn’t this the ultimate irony?

The same applies for those tasked with Church and State leadership, except that which is most easily lost is not wealth but respect. Hard won, easily lost and even harder regained, if possible at all.

But such situations are far from unique to the Emerald Isle. The same salutary lessons need to be learned the world over, with a greater emphasis on values-based leadership, with integrity and humility to the forefront as a counter to the negative aspects of ego and pride.

Many of the solutions to the problems which have arisen as a direct consequence of poor leadership and low integrity are actually contained in what should be the organisations's own “management bible” – the bible itself.

As many biblical suggestions ‘fly in the face of human nature’ they should be familiar to christians of all denominations, as many of Christ’s own teachings themselves often advocate the polar opposite reaction to that which would come naturally to many.

The catholic church has continued the example set by Christ’s own teachings throughout its history including in recent years by producing many wonderful encyclicals on many aspects of society and life, but the loss of public trust is evidence that the advice offered has been too infrequently practiced by its authors and those tasked with the onerous responsibility of organisational leadership.

Evidently action speaks louder than words. Not unlike the public sector and some discredited private sector organisations, it may take a radical rethink of governance based more on inclusion than exclusion and respect rather than disrespect for all stakeholders if significant trust and reputation restoration is to be possible.

A renewed focus on *integrity* (a notable and regular factor in the Old Testament including psalms and proverbs) notably doing the right thing by the people the organisation was founded to nurture, guide and protect, rather than on maintenance of a discredited status quo based on the apparent primacy of the organisation itself, will take a great deal of two further noble but too often lacking biblical characteristics - *courage and humility* – if any further erosion of whatever trust is remaining is to be prevented or indeed if the restorative process is to be commenced with any likelihood of ‘success’.

With some describing integrity as ‘doing the right thing when no-one is looking’, consistently doing so when

many are looking poses a far greater challenge – but one that people trained in theology, philosophy and spirituality – areas which people in other walks in life are advised to study and practice in their deliberations when facing challenges - should be far more capable of dealing with than many others in society.

Assuming they don't lack the moral courage to actually put into practice their training and beliefs, no matter what the personal cost, prioritising the very people that the organisation was founded to guide, nurture and protect, may be the most appropriate first steps in the uphill battle to rediscover mission and restore trust.

If pride and pursuit of power can too frequently be seen to be one of the most formidable barriers to organisational and personal progress, often associated with leaders in business and public service who seem to possess '*a sense of entitlement*', this would appear to be almost identical to the excessive sense of self-worth associated with the similar obstacle to progress and respect that has been described within religious circles as '*clericalism*'.

Facing such challenges, based on human weakness in situations when indeed strength is most required, the simple question which in practice can pose such a great operational challenge is "*who is supposed to be serving whom?*"

Organisations which prioritise their principal stakeholders in decision-making, enhance their reputation. Organisations which prioritise themselves over their principal stakeholders in decision-making, risk damaging their reputation.

Such as when the catholic church misguidedly believed it was "protecting the institution" by covering up the abusive behaviour of some of its employees. Owning up and dealing with the abhorrent behaviour of a small minority could have enhanced the reputation of both "the institution" and the hard working, committed and often selfless majority, many of whom like true shepherds are far more interested in the welfare of their "flock" than their own. True christians.

At the end of the day, "*there is no right way to do a wrong thing*", although some may try to justify that there is either before or after taking a bad decision.

When 'clericalism' becomes associated with leaders at all levels within the church from local parish to international positions of authority, they could be judged to have fallen well short of the behaviour advocated by Christ himself who criticised the church leaders of his time for their hypocrisy and fondness for the vestiges, power and prestige associated with positions of authority.

Had they then and now instead practiced the *humility* displayed by Christ, "*emptied themselves, assuming the role of a servant*", putting themselves last and their people first, the situation facing the global catholic church of today could be quite different.

This *potentially* extraordinary and visionary 'organisation', founded on the most simple and noble values including love and respect for others, has floundered due to the very errors its founder so visibly identified and in effect predicted. If an organisation were to truly base itself on christian principles, it could be awe-inspiring! So why should Christ's own organisation not set itself such audacious goals??

With both Church and State, perhaps only being seen to throw out many of the old rules, regulations and practices associated with a bygone era and introducing entirely new practices, including excluding no-one in society from employment and promotion to the highest levels in both organisations, may result in the level of trust and reputation restoration which is so demonstrably required, but which poses a challenge to leaders who to date do not appear to have appreciated the enormity of the challenge and the necessity of a radical rehaul of how both entities are governed.

The status quo is most certainly not an option.

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