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The Lausanne Manifesto

For A Healthier and More Vital World

Preamble

When attempting to formulate a definition of what is meant by health, one is immediately confronted by the realisation that there are at least two categories of well-being that this term refers to - the mental and physical. Similarly, saving lives may refer not only to the work for preventing premature death from disease or illness, but also to efforts to prevent persons from taking their own life. *Ipsa facto*, for us, as leaders, to fulfil the ambition of greater global health and longevity, we acknowledge that this does not by any means only require us to address physical well-being. This is a point amply illustrated by the World Health Organisation's [WHO] statistics:

- Estimates made by the WHO in 2002 showed that 154 million people globally suffer from depression.
- By the year 2020, depression is projected to reach second largest contributor to the global burden of disease, calculated for all ages, both sexes.
- In the year 2000 approximately one million people globally died from suicide, a rate of mortality equivalent to one death from suicide every forty seconds. This does not account for uncompleted suicide attempts, which may occur up to twenty times more frequently than completed suicide.
- Mental illnesses are estimated to be a mitigating factor in more than 90% of all cases of suicide.

Clearly health is an issue of both body and mind. However, given the myriad of different forms that disease and illness can take in both these realms, it might not be immediately apparent what non-specific interventions we, as leaders in diffuse fields and endeavours, may be able to undertake in order to fulfil ambitions of improving health and preventing premature death. It is our premise, though, that while it may not be feasible for us to fully facilitate health and longevity, primarily due to our acknowledged inability to overcome, through leadership skills alone, the bio-chemical components of medical affliction, we nevertheless believe that we can still make significant and tangible contributions to the emergence of a healthier and more vital world. This we declare possible in the following ways:

A - Stress Reduction

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines stress as 'a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or very demanding circumstances'. The etymology of the word is from Latin, meaning 'drawn tight'. Thus to be in a condition of stress means that

an individual, under pressure from a situation that they are struggling to cope with, has become tense, withdrawn and thus unable to fully function in the particular capacity that they have been appointed to.

While we acknowledge that a certain amount of stress may spur a person to become more efficient and productive, we believe that this insidious condition has, across the globe, in all fields of human endeavour, reached excessive proportions, and as such is something that we must address as a matter of priority. While the exact links between stress and ill health are still not entirely clear, a growing body of evidence is suggesting that there is a causal link.

An example of this is the relationship between stress and heart disease, which, according to the WHO, is the number one global killer, representing 30% of all deaths. While the causal link between excess stress and heart disease has not been definitively established, there is some compelling evidence for a connection, most notably the findings from the long-term Whitehall and Whitehall II studies, conducted by Sir Michael Marmot and Dr. Tarani Chandola respectively, both of University College London. As just one example, both studies found that:

Male and female subjects under the age of 50 years and determined to be under severe pressure (under heavy workloads and with little control over their jobs), had a 68% higher risk of developing heart disease than other subjects.

As leaders who are determined to address this critical challenge of how to reduce stress, we propose the following measures as possible remedies:

- To ensure that those who work with us are only appointed to positions that they have the confidence and the skills to fill. If current employees lack those core requirements then it will be necessary to either shift them to more appropriate roles, release them from employment, or for the necessary training to be provided so that they may feel equal to the tasks asked of them.
- To assign to an individual only an amount of work with which they may cope, and, wherever possible, only work which encourages them to bring forth and express their individual talents.
- To provide and encourage access to contexts, such as counselling/therapy, in which any excess stress and tension may be acknowledged and safely released by those who so wish, and simultaneously to foster and support an ambiance in the workplace that is, as far as is feasible, relaxed.

B - Guiding Principle

It is our contention that if an individual is highly inspired and motivated by the work that they do then it will be of immense benefit to both their mental and physical well-being, as that person seeks to optimise all of their resources to the fulfilment of their task. That a person who has something greater than themselves to believe in and fulfil is inspired, not only to live, but to live as well as they can under their current circumstances, is an idea

that has anecdotally recurred throughout history. Perhaps the most notorious example of this is the life and work of Dr. Viktor Frankl who, as a result of his experiences in various Nazi concentration camps, found that those who, despite the circumstances, still retained a will to meaning stood a far greater chance of survival. In the book that Frankl published about this, *Man's Search For Meaning*, he asserts that, 'We can discover this meaning in life in three different ways: (1) by creating a work or doing a deed; (2) by experiencing a something or encountering someone; and (3) by the attitude we take toward unavoidable suffering.'

This impulse to personal fulfilment and transcendence may actually be an innate part of each person's constitution. As Arianna Huffington, editor-in-chief of the *Huffington Post*, hypothesises, it is a 'Fourth Instinct':

Most psychologists and biologists look at human behavior in terms of three instincts: survival, sex, and power. I believe, however, that you cannot understand human behavior without recognizing a fourth one - the instinct for transcendence, the instinct to connect to the part of us that goes beyond our materiality and survives our death, that connects with our soul. That's what explains our search for meaning, whether it drives us to art or to religion or to altruistic behavior that cannot be explained purely in terms of self-interest.

On this premise, it is our recommendation that we, who as leaders are endowed with the capacity to determine what the guiding principle of our endeavour is, need to formulate a bold new vision for the twenty-first century that meets both the needs of our time and which also inspires those who inhabit it to arise to our contemporary challenges. In this way, we propose that the underlying ethic of a leadership-driven initiative, in any and all fields, should be the creation of, and contribution to, an environmentally sustainable, socially just and spiritually fulfilling human presence on Earth. Or, to put it another way, that the work we undertake should be simultaneously beneficial not only to ourselves, but also to society and to the Earth.

We firmly believe that such an intention has the potential to galvanise people for more inspiring and fulfilling work, and thereby catalyse the evolution in themselves towards greater mental and physical health.

C – Purpose-driven work

The great misfortune, the root of all the evil to come, was the loss of faith in personal opinions. People imagined it was out of date to follow their own moral sense, that they must all sing the same tune in chorus, and live by other people's notions, the notions which were being crammed down everybody's throat. And there arose the power of the glittering phrase ...

So wrote Boris Pasternak in *Doctor Zhivago*, a novel written against the backdrop of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and subsequent Civil War. We echo this sentiment - if those who work with us are going to be inspired to greater health and longevity by the guiding

principle outlined in Part B, then it unlikely to be effective if we merely present this as a slogan or catchphrase. For this ethic to be made explicit or to be turned into an ideology that those who work with us are compelled to aspire to will, we feel, ultimately result in it remaining nothing more than an intellectual concept that gradually becomes less and less appealing. In any case, it may be that such principles already exists in the workforce; as Professor Theodore Zeldin reveals, in an article for the *British Medical Journal*, Volume 319, 18-25 December 1999, only 8% of people in Britain feel that they have the same values as their employers.

If it is recognised that the impulse for fulfilment and transcendence is existent, and that there is a necessity for leaders to bring their activities more into alignment with a guiding principle that honours and nurtures those desires, then the question arises of what is the most effective way in which that can be done? What we propose is of utmost necessary for us, as leaders, is to take responsibility for the evaluation of whether any and all of our chosen courses of organisational action meet this guiding principle. In this way the driver of our endeavours becomes purpose, an ambition that transcends but includes other such motivators as profit or productivity.

Hence, the time is ripe for purpose-orientated action to be woven into the fabric of each of our fields, not so much as a moral imperative as it is evidently a fundamental necessity for greater health and productivity. In aspiring to, and working towards, this purpose, such a guiding principle as the one outlined in Part B can be most effectively utilised as a yardstick rather than as an ideological cudgel. From this perspective, the fourth instinct, and by proxy greater health and longevity, is something that we, as leaders, can inspire but not impose.

D - Embodiment

'The best way to present a message is to become it' - Karl Rove.

Our final recommendation is that for all of the aforementioned suggestions to be accepted and implemented with maximum benefit to the mental and physical health of those who work with us, then we need to begin with ourselves first. That is, we are aware that in the past leaders have attempted to compel their charges to a particular course of action or an idea that they themselves have not yet embodied, thereby not convincingly evidencing why others should follow, or even listen to, their directives.

It is our supposition that compulsion as a means to achieve the motivation of employees is, at best, a limited methodology. Rather, we propose that, as leaders, in order to inspire others to greater health we ourselves need to become role-models of mental and physical well-being. Hence, we need to lead by example, to embody health in all its forms, and by that act of commitment and dedication we are firmly convinced that we will catalyse any global aspiration to well-being, and encourage others to also take personal responsibility as best they can for it.

E – Conclusion

In summary, the complex and diverse factors that undermine health and longevity, which themselves are diffuse fields, cannot be addressed by a leadership-driven panacea. While we recognise this limitation, we do not, however, feel it should in anyway be an excuse for taking those measures that we are able to. It is our conviction, as pioneering leaders, that the greatest capacity we have to contribute to a global ambition of improving health and saving lives lies in our ability to influence and re-negotiate the nature of the work that we perform, and the relationship of our followers to it. And, in order to demonstrate that most convincingly, that we need to begin with ourselves.