

In my last five “issues” of One Man’s Opinion, I have posited five different types of leader (Mentor, Trainer, Partner, Controller, Dictator; see Archives, July 26, 2008) and written about a Mentor (see Archives, October 14, 2008), a Trainer (see Archives, December 29, 2008), a Partner (see Archives, March 29, 2009), a Controller (see Archives, July 1, 2009). I vowed to write a bit about each type, so I’m on to Dictator, the final installment in this series. Here goes –

Any reader will know that Partner is my favorite kind of leader, and it will come as no surprise that “Dictator” is my least favorite. Having worked for one, I can assure you that nothing about the experience provides any satisfaction. Even a great salary and the suggestion of more do not balance the challenges and difficulty in dealing with someone having only a few of the characteristics I describe below. Having been in an environment where the leader embodied most, if not all, of these characteristics was an exercise in regular self-flagellation; fortunately, I found escape (and established Four Corners Advisors).

A Dictator, first and foremost, wants results, regardless of other considerations. I am not suggesting here any concepts of dishonesty or lack of integrity. Rather, this is a constant *modus operandi*. Results only are important; process, direct and straightforward dealings, time considerations, and the legitimate objections to an approach that the counter-party might take should be swept aside to achieve the desired result.

The Dictator typically will have no regard for the subordinate’s individual characteristics, experience, approach or a differing style. Virtually by definition, the Dictator takes no interest in the person who is his subordinate, and, certainly, offers little respect for the subordinate’s experience, intellect, or personal operating approach or, indeed, the person himself. By contrast, the Dictator believes that his approach to any issue is the correct path and likely the only means of attacking an issue.

Interestingly, the Dictator, even when he might not fully grasp the nuance of an issue, retains the “authority to be wrong”. That is, once he makes up his mind, facts, persuasion and argument are useless to change it. And, although the Dictator may have ordered a result, if he doesn’t like it, he will find a scapegoat.

One certain Dictator of my acquaintance exhibited his clear lack of respect for subordinates by making all scheduled appointment times merely advisory; that is, he might insist that one be at his office foyer at the appointed time, but then he would keep

one waiting. That the subordinate has other work or, at the end of the day, some plan for the evening is of little moment to the leader.

I have often discussed the difference between working for the evil leader and working for the egotistical one. When working for someone inherently bad (not a situation that can last too long), one can ordinarily discern how a particular issue might affect him. When working for the egotist, any subtle aspect of a matter might have an impact that the subordinate might not be able to anticipate. An evil Dictator, of course, is worse (and, one hopes, a short-term phenomenon; that is, get out fast and don't linger) than the egotistical Dictator, but this is a matter of degree. Neither is salutary, and, in my case, it was downright unhealthy.

Fortunately, something good has emerged from that slag heap.

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This will be the second straight OMO in which I have stated that the hotel industry has not improved since I posted my last OMO (No. 9). In a recent blog which I entitled "*Dazed and Confused*", I stated that I do not understand those commentators who see and feel the improvement. Though, as this is written in early October, jobless claims reported their first weekly decline since January, it is hard to see evidence of improvement.

Capital markets are constipated, special servicers have yet to clear any transactions, and only now are heavily-underwater hotels being looked at for transactions.

In commenting on my "*Dazed and Confused*" blog, one of my partners noted that he agreed with my confusion and suggested that I should have ended that particular blog slightly differently from how I actually ended it. He suggested I should have said, "*I have two balls, neither of which is crystal.*" Consider this an alternate ending.

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Four Corners Notes

Since my last OMO, one of my fellow Carolina alumni was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame. In his acceptance speech, Michael Jordan was both heartfelt and unflaggingly combative. His roundabout (some say, half-hearted) expressions of gratitude tended to be directed toward those whose real or imagined slights of MJ

propelled him to the heights of greatness on the basketball court. There was a “*what’s the next slight?*” element to his speech that was jarring. I think of the conflict between owners and managers that seems to be expanding as one looks for a scapegoat, and I liken it to MJ’s pique at every slight. Sorry, Michael, there is not necessarily someone to blame all the time.