

LEADERSHIP 2000

FOUR PIONEERS

Warren Bennis talks with three CEOs about the leadership lessons they've learned from important people in their lives.

The Global Institute for Leadership Development hosts an annual Emerging Leader Program that brings together people who will help lead their organizations into the future. One of last year's Lessons of Leadership panels was hosted by Global Institute co-chair and University of Southern California professor Warren Bennis and featured Herman Miller chairman emeritus Max DePree, Motorola chairman of the executive committee Bob Galvin, and Levi Strauss chairman of the board and CEO Bob Haas. Here are excerpts of their conversation.

So, as a leader, I focus on enabling and encouraging people.

DePree: We're becoming more interdependent. The way that you focus on people is by learning how to establish and nurture relationships. Technology is wonderful, but it's not sufficient. Relationships are the things that enable technology and all our other skills.

Bennis: How do you build trust in large institutions?

Haas: I don't think there *is* such a thing as a large organization. I think there are organizations that *behave* like large organizations.

organized institution that will personify most of our institutions in 20 to 40 years. We anticipate that Motorola will be bordering on a trillion-dollar organization in the lifetime of my grandchildren. How do you organize for that? You don't. You let the organization organize itself. You use the principles of the cosmos—autocatalytic sets, chaos theory, and complexity theory—and then you trust people to do the job for you.

At Motorola, the way we will build over half of our leadership is through the children of employees. What better bloodline than the children of our em-

REFLECT

Bennis: With all the changes you've seen and expect to see, what one fundamental truth of management still applies?

Galvin: Integrity hasn't changed as being a supreme requirement. And I consider trust to be the greatest motivator.

DePree: I agree with Bob on the matters of integrity and trust. I would add that trust takes a lot of moxie and commitment to build. It takes a long time, and you can lose it overnight.

Haas: I think there are two essential things. The first is the value of people, and the second is the importance of values. None of our enterprises are worth anything—Motorola's great technology, Herman Miller's brilliant design, Levi's innovation and heritage—without our people. People are what make it happen.

Our work experience is as intimate as our work groups. Leaders create an environment that is intimate and defines how an individual feels about the larger enterprise. We [Levi Strauss] have 36,000 people in over 60 countries around the world. That's a huge, sprawling enterprise. There are pockets of it that feel enormously personal and exciting, and where bonds of trust and mutual commitment are characteristic. There are other parts of it that are grinding, dull, impersonal, and horrible, and I think all of us recognize that picture in most of our enterprises. Our goals as leaders are to amplify the intimacy of every work group.

Galvin: What these gentlemen are talking about is the heart and soul of the self-

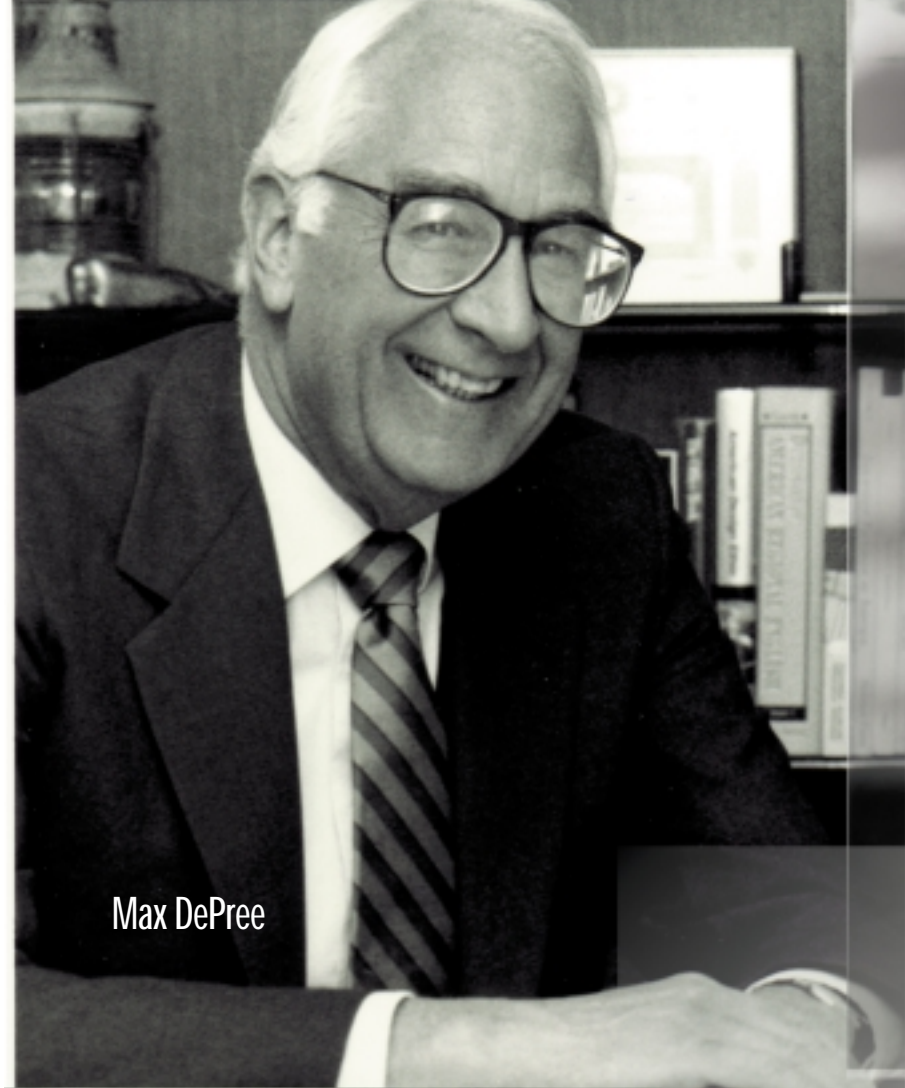
employees to lead us for the next two or three generations? That's a declared strategy in our company.

Bennis: Tell us about the camp that Motorola runs during the summer.

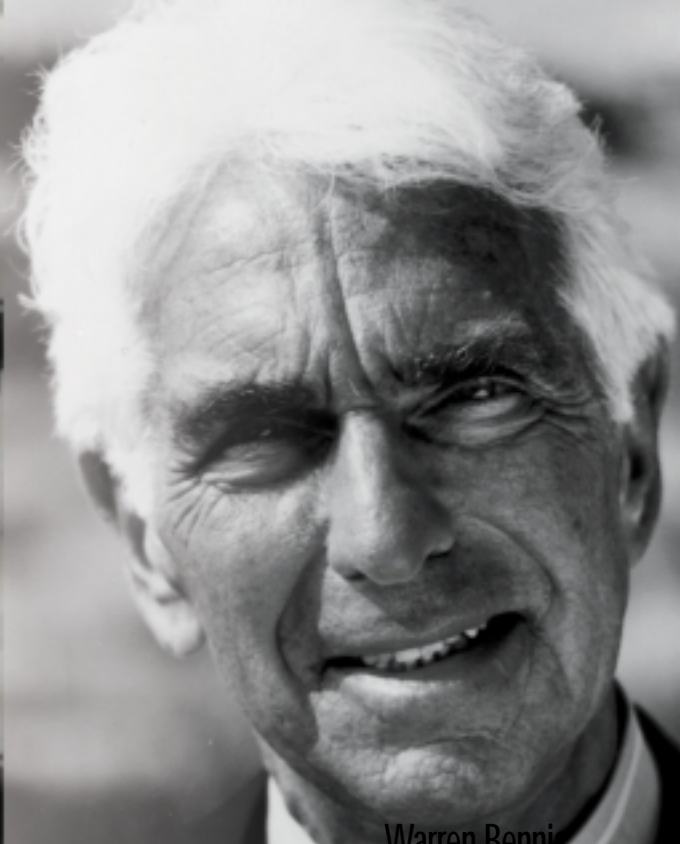
Galvin: We determined when we'd have to appoint our first 100 incremental new presidents in the company. Then, we did a regression analysis that indicated that we'd need those presidents before they're 35 years of age. If you work back from that, we'd have to hire them by age 14. We didn't belittle that thought; we could discover people as they entered high school.

Eventually, we will have a program where 10,000 Motorola employees' children will be going to business problem-solving camps around the world

ON LEADERSHIP



Max DePree



Warren Bennis



Bob Haas



Bob Galvin

preparing them so that we'll know their potential for leadership by the time they're 18, 19, or 20 years old.

DePree: As Bob Haas said, we have to be careful about thinking of ourselves as big organizations. I think it's much more important to see ourselves as being out in the public. When we take on leadership responsibilities, we have no more secrets.

To build trust, the first step is to respect everybody. One way is to understand that it's not an intellectual commitment; it's a matter of the heart. The second way is to discipline yourself to take everybody seriously.

Another step is to keep your promises. A leader who's confused about who she is will lead a group who's confused about who they are. So, it's impossible to have an organization in which trust is a meaningful element if leaders don't keep their promises.

Bennis: What events shaped your lives? What were the defining moments?

Haas: I'll share a learning technique. My daughter is a competitive equestrian. Some time ago, she was at a clinic taught by the coach of the U.S. Olympic team. He said, "Do you want to know the secret of great riders? Great riders squat."

You'll see them by the side of the ring watching other riders navigate the course, watching how horses react to obstacles, and watching the techniques that other riders use to overcome course challenges. They just squat and observe. Most of the lessons that have been important to me have come from squatting and observing. The frustrating thing is that those opportunities are around us all the time. And we miss so many wonderful opportunities to learn.

My father, his father, and others in the family taught me the importance of humility. Let your actions speak for you. I think most of us learn many of our leadership lessons around the family hearth. For example, my father never talked about business at the dining room table. But what he did talk about were the people in the business. And, much like the millwright in Max's book, they were what he would call, "the little people." And he didn't mean that in a demeaning way. They were the janitors, the truck drivers, the sewing-machine operators, and the secretaries. What he was communicating was the value of everybody in an enterprise.

I spent time during my Peace Corps

service in a small village, and that village had a lot of foreign aid missions. I was the only American living in a small African village of 10,000 people. I came to appreciate what it feels like to be different and what it feels like to be ignored. I took that lesson to heart as I think about people in our enterprise who have so much to contribute and wish to be enabled.

When I became CEO in 1984, our business was losing altitude quickly. I didn't have a clue about what to do. We had gone through all the usual fads and had become bureaucratic and sporadic in our decision making. I was scared and didn't have the answers. So, I did the unthinkable for me. I reached out to my colleagues in management and said, "We're in this together. I don't have the answers. I'm not Lee Iacocca. I'm not the heroic leader. We've got to figure this out. Come back to me with your own prescription." Lo and behold, being liberated from the old hierarchical model, they came back with what we need to do. Much of it was painful, but we got the organization back on track.

Once we got the business fixed, there was still an emptiness in our company. At the end of the day, we all want our work life to have greater meaning. Our management group came together in response to that void and defined, in 1987, what we call our aspirations—the values and behaviors that we expect our people to follow. It was a powerful, unifying principle for running a global company, and it enabled us to take risks that we would not have taken because people would point out the gaps between our stated aspirations and workplace realities. It's leaders' jobs to help organizations close that gap.

I learned a couple of lessons. It's not only OK to be vulnerable, it's important to show that you're human and don't have the answers. Second, there's help if you are willing to ask. The experience caused me to learn to trust my instincts. I had squatted and observed a lot of management styles. I learned what worked and what didn't work. Above all, I understood that our gut and heart are good indicators of what's right.

DePree: I grew up in a family of seven children during the Great Depression. I began to learn about leadership from my mother. One of the early lessons had to do with gender diversity because she assigned work in ways that were mysteri-

ous to me. Later I figured out what she was doing.

Another lesson I learned from her was forgiveness—how enabling that is. Trying to raise seven kids is a tough job. Things didn't always go well. Once, some of us were standing in the kitchen waiting to be assigned work, and our older brother wasn't around. Somebody asked, "Where's Hugh?" I can remember my mother saying, "Don't bother Hugh; he's in the garage practicing smoking." Another great lesson was that the boss always know more than you think she does.

I was sitting home with my mother chatting about things that had happened, and I asked her, "Don't you remember all the stupid things we did?" And she said, "Of course I can remember. I choose not to."

That was a very early lesson: Most mistakes are part of the educational process. They're not terminal. They are part of any lively, forward-looking organization.

Defining moments evolved in my own career around two things. One was a group of mentors. Bob Galvin and I share one—Carl Frost—a wonderful industrial psychologist and professor at Michigan State University for years. I wouldn't be here today if he had not been active in my life. My mother was a mentor, my wife was a mentor, and Peter Drucker has been one of my mentors. And I'm grateful to those people.

The other defining moment was when I decided to leave the company. My father used to say to me, "You've got to learn how to play second fiddle." And I didn't take that advice very well. So, I applied for another job at a college 20 miles away. I stayed at Herman Miller *and* become an adjunct faculty member at Aquinas College. That led me to understand that it was important to have a parallel track.

I worked in an organization to make money, serve, and grow. I worked in the teaching profession where I learned to lead without any power. That was a fundamental, defining moment in my life—learning how to lead where I didn't have any power.

Galvin: How many of you think that humility is a significant quality for leaders? Let me define it for you. People who are humble do not think any less of themselves; they just think more of other

people. I learned that from you, Warren.

A defining factor for me was to observe my father as a role model. He had to renew the company in 1930 when the company he started with was going out of business. Renewal meant much more to us than change. To renew, you must anticipate. To anticipate, you must commit to do something. That was absolutely defining to our corporation.

Two other things were significant. As a youngster, I asked, "How do you write a creative theme?" No teacher could tell me how to be creative. I read a book that gave me a recipe. It had 10 or 12 steps of the vocational skill of creative thinking. I became prolifically creative by following a process.

The other defining educational experience for me was reading about counter-intuitiveness in the biography of Bernard Baruch. I challenge you: If it's intuitive, it's probably wrong; the opposite is probably right. Once I learned that lesson, I always challenged the common direction of any of my associates or the industry. But the differentials are only findable if you challenge the intuitive.

Another of the jewels that I learned from Warren: The absolutely distinguishing quality of a leader is that a leader is someone who takes us elsewhere.

Haas: I agree completely; distrust conventional wisdom. It can get you into trouble. Everyone assumes that there is a standard, conventional solution. Our business is based on innovation. We have to reinvent ourselves every season in the marketplace. It's so easy to believe in common trends and common wisdom. Unless you're willing to take risks and challenge the ways things have been done, you're going to get mired down in mediocrity.

DePree: We have to learn how to abandon ourselves to people who can do things we can't do. That requires humility and vulnerability. It's a high-risk business. But it's not nearly as high-risk as the herd mentality.

Haas: Companies no longer give us gold watches for just sticking around. We have to reinvent ourselves, our relevancy, and our currency. How do you renew yourselves? How do you keep fresh?

DePree: It has been almost 10 years since I retired as CEO of Herman Miller. I wanted to help people in nonprofit organizations learn about leadership in for-profit organizations. For a while, I

did some speeches and seminars.

I now work with about 10 people, all of whom see me as one of their mentors. In order for a mentorship to work, it has to be a co-mentoring arrangement. You can't have a teacher and a student. You both have to be a teacher and a student. That keeps me alive. I keep learning.

I discovered later not to be a second guesser. I don't have any angst about things that used to be. I don't worry about my failures, and I don't think a lot about the successes, either. I'm always looking forward now. The [writing] has become a second career for me. I think it's important to have something to look forward to.

Another thing you have to learn is how to discern when you're living within your priorities and when you're letting life get the best of you. I have learned how to simplify my life. I have a lot of abandoned baggage, and that's a very liberating thing.

Galvin: Notice that Bob asked the question. That's significant. He wanted to learn. And Max said that he spends his time, to a substantial degree, learning.

I think somewhere inside those observations is the essence of how you continue to be fresh and new. And it manifests itself in situations such as mine where I'm a voracious reader. I am in motion for motion's sake—my father's philosophy. I walk through the field, pick up some seeds, and carry them to seed the next bed.

Because elsewhere was always my target and elsewhere had to be in the future, I found myself asking, in the interest of my associates, how we can increase the size of the pie. That's an opportunity to create more wealth and jobs. It's fun to learn and apply that knowledge.

Bennis: You always seem to have your eyebrows raised in curiosity. What led you to the complexity and chaos theories at the Santa Fe Institute? Anything to do with Motorola?

Galvin: Yes. It had to do with increasing the size of the pie. I presumed that growth opportunities would allow us to become very big. Therefore, how would we run ourselves? That got me interested in studying biology and the essence of the cosmos. Everything starts from the bottom up. That led me to the Santa Fe Institute where they were thinking about organization theories for which there would not be any organization structure. That's how the whole thing tied together.

Bennis: What advice do you have about balancing family, fun, and festivals with production, profits, and performance? I'm especially concerned about working couples with children.

Galvin: We do it imperfectly. One of the remarkable things about balance is that our families are a system. We are, hopefully, blessed by people who have the tolerance to do more than their share to help us. It's not our preference, but it's a safety valve.

If you're going to be a business leader, you're going to find yourself devoting disproportionate time to your career. So, you have to have a remarkable ability to get value out of that time you have for other activities.

Haas: I think the only solution is extreme discipline.

When I was younger and single, I thought it was possible to do business, keep up a social life, be involved in the community, and dabble in supporting political candidates. I have now decided that I can only do two things well. Clearly, what Bob said about leading a modern enterprise is right—it's consuming and there's no substitute for face-to-face presence. But it's mandatory as long as I choose to do this. Then, I can choose between maintaining an active social life, being with my family, being more vigorous in my community activities, or learning a hobby.

I've chosen my family. I don't see my friends. It's a great loss for me, but they understand. I don't do as much in the community as is my heritage and my desire, but that will come. This is a very precious time, and I want to be there for my daughter.

DePree: To a certain extent, I'm with you when you use the word *discipline*, and I endorse that. My tendency would be to use the term *discernment*.

All of us are in a state of becoming. I think it's important to have a clear picture of who it is we would like to be. The first discernment is that you see clearly the context in which your life takes place. There are a lot of unworthy pressures that we all have to deal with, and it's important to see one when it raises its head. Not every piece of mail you get is something you have to deal with. Not everybody in the world has the right to assign you work by sending you an email or a letter. It's OK to forget that stuff. It's an unworthy pressure.

The same thing applies to the media.

You don't have to listen to TV, and you don't have to buy a newspaper every day. A lot of us give enormous amounts of time—which we could be spending with a child, a spouse, or a grandchild—paying attention to what we think may be going on [in the world]. And we already know what's going on.

Another discernment is to think about the difference between completion and culmination. Completion has to do with tasks. Culmination has to do with potential. If you can begin to focus more on what your potential ought to be, that's worth some thought. There's also a difference between a strategic plan for your life and the idea of leaving a legacy. They're different matters.

Galvin: Mary and I had a strategy when our children [were small] to entertain as families. We didn't attend a lot of fancy parties. But we would have you, your wife, and your children over, and that's how we entertained at our home. We were entertained similarly at the other homes.

Let me mention two people who were there. One was a fellow named Bill Osmanski; he was the MVP for the first all-star football game in 1939. We invited him over, but not because he was prominent. Bill never swore, never drank, and probably never had an unkind thought about anyone. Our kids were looking up to that man and thinking: "Wow, he is a great role model!"

When Mary and I were in Tel Aviv in 1971, we got a telegram that our first grandson was born. I pulled out a recorder and began: "Dear Brian: Welcome to this world, You are one day old." At the end, I said, "Brian, you are listening to these words for the first time on your 21st birthday." Then, we gave the tape to his mother.

About five years ago, all the family

This year's Emerging Leader Program will take place December 6-11, 1998, at Palm Desert, California. For more information, contact Linkage, Global Institute for Leadership Development, One Forbes Road, Lexington, Massachusetts; 781.862.3157; www.linkageinc.com/GILD.

got together in a role-modeling experience, and we welcomed Brian to his majority. Our daughter had a medal struck with a T for trust, and we presented him the first Galvin Medal of Trust. It was the central, unifying agency of our family. And with each child coming to 21, we have a ceremony. All the family comes together—

however difficult that may be.

My point is this: There are sincere tactics that you can use that have transcending effects in balancing personal and corporate affairs. □

The Lessons of Leadership panel conversation was excerpted and edited by Donna Abernathy, T&D technology & products editor; dabernathy@astd.org.