

# Trafton International Management Consulting Group

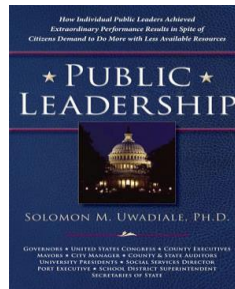
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## The Courage For Leaders To Promote Open Debates



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There is no question that managing people is difficult, especially when you have the responsibility of managing a group of highly intelligent and confident professionals who might be used to working with a certain bit of autonomy in their own right. What I have learned from some of the successful individual leaders I interviewed in my book is that they have developed exceptional skills in inspirational leadership practices that helped them meet some of the critical goals and objectives for their organization.

They shared with me why they were successful. It is important to note that before you can lead successfully you need to first clarify your responsibilities and parameters inherent to your role as a leader and to ensure that you add value to your group activities. In other words, you need to confirm your mandate to lead the people, and then build relationships with each individual team. With this you need to develop essential skills in managing conflicts and getting consensus.

The challenge for leadership after clarifying your role, your mandate, and building relationships, will be to not fall into **the trap of group thinking**. Leaders hear a “yes” too often and they don’t hear bad news until it is too late. Former Governor Christine Gregoire of Washington State did express to me how she hates group thinking where everyone agrees with her on important issues. She says whenever she is holding a meeting with her cabinet or with any group, and they all agree with her right away on an important issue without much debate, she will purposely invite a third party or an expert who will intentionally stir up a debate on the issue at hand by disagreeing with the group. The outside expert is encouraged to challenge views of the Governor’s cabinet members, question their assumptions and plans. What she found out is that this type of action encourages open debate that promotes candor, better decisions, and more successful implementation.

She told me that she has used this tactic several times, and it has yielded a better outcome for her and for the citizens of Washington State.

Managers often feel uncomfortable or intimidated about dissenting in the presence of powerful leaders such as the governor, the Secretary, or county executive, to name a few. The absence of a healthy debate according to these leaders could lead to costly decisions.

I learned from these leaders personal stories on how to challenge key assumptions and encourage people to define their problem properly or identify opportunities in a whole new ways.

### **Your Next Move**

Where is your leadership courage to transform your organization?

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