

Leadership Instalments

Lessons from the Inauguration

By Dan Gaynor

ON TUESDAY JANUARY 20TH BARACK OBAMA WAS INAUGURATED as the 44th President of the United States of America. He faces one of the most daunting leadership challenges imaginable - restoring a deeply broken economy and the broken confidence that has accompanied it. Whether the President succeeds or fails remains to be seen, but there are lessons to be taken from his inaugural address and it seems both timely and worthwhile to look at them through some selected quotes.

The President was realistic but not pessimistic. He instilled optimism:

“Today I say to you that the challenges we face are real. They are serious and they are many. They will not be met easily or in a short span of time. But know this, America: They will be met.”

He moved to dispel the real enemies - fear and division:

“On this day, we gather because we have chosen hope over fear, unity of purpose over conflict and discord.”

He called all Americans, regardless of their political affiliation, to action:

“In reaffirming the greatness of our nation, we understand that greatness is never a given. It must be earned. Our journey has never been one of shortcuts or settling for less. It has not been the path for the fainthearted -- for those who prefer leisure over work, or seek only the pleasures of riches and fame. Rather, it has been the risk-takers, the doers, the makers of things -- some celebrated, but more often men and women obscure in their labor -- who have carried us up the long, rugged path toward prosperity and freedom.”

He reaffirmed strengths:

“We remain the most prosperous, powerful nation on Earth. Our workers are no less productive than when this crisis began. Our minds are no less inventive, our goods and services no less needed than they were last week or last month or last year. Our capacity remains undiminished.”

He described his plans:

“For everywhere we look, there is work to be done. The state of the economy calls for action, bold and swift, and we will act -- not only to create new jobs, but to lay a new foundation for growth. We will



build the roads and bridges, the electric grids and digital lines that feed our commerce and bind us together. We will restore science to its rightful place, and wield technology's wonders to raise health care's quality and lower its cost. We will harness the sun and the winds and the soil to fuel our cars and run our factories. And we will transform our schools and colleges and universities to meet the demands of a new age. All this we can do. And all this we will do.”

He closed by instilling two powerful forces - hope and a sense of mission:

“Let it be said by our children's children that when we were tested, we refused to let this journey end, that we did not turn back, nor did we falter; and with eyes fixed on the horizon and God's grace upon us, we carried forth that great gift of freedom and delivered it safely to future generations.”

While our leadership challenges do not have the scope or gravity of the President's we too lead others who are worried. They are concerned about their companies, their jobs, their families and their futures. They need strong leadership now. We can provide it by focusing on the same elements the President chose: instilling optimism, dispelling fear, uniting our teams and calling them to action, reaffirming strengths, laying out our plans, and instilling hope and a sense of mission to start them down the right path and lead them through this storm.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1. Which elements should you focus most on over the coming weeks and why?**
- 2. How will you communicate this to your team?**

For information on a workshop or personal coaching to help you lead your team through this storm contact us for an appointment.

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Dan Gaynor can be contacted at:
tel 403.880.1780
email dan@gaynorconsulting.com