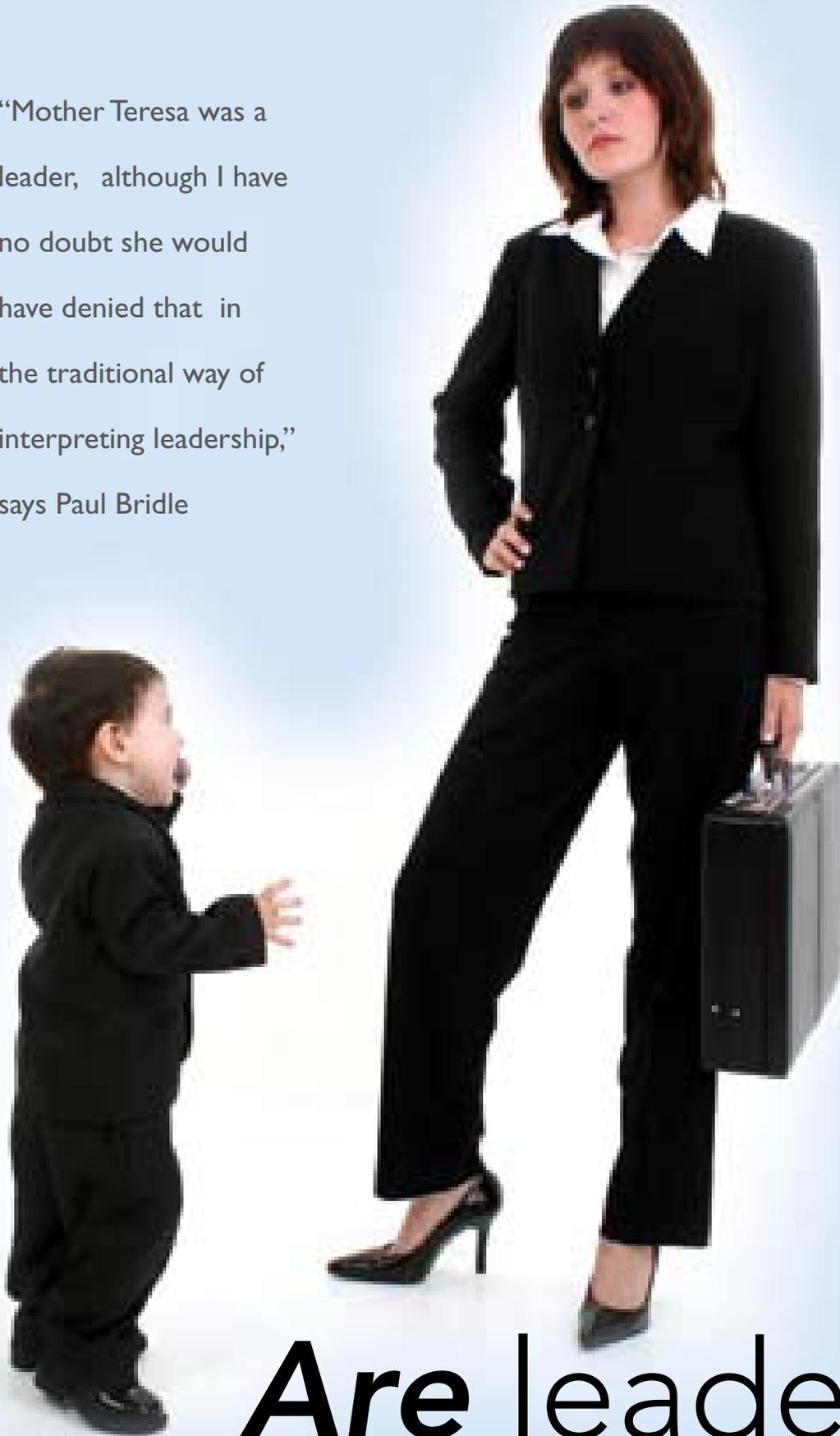


“Mother Teresa was a leader, although I have no doubt she would have denied that in the traditional way of interpreting leadership,” says Paul Bridle



# ***Are leaders Born?***



Paul Bridle

This is probably one of the most common questions that I get asked. Is leadership something that people are born with, can they be taught how to be a leader?

I was given some statistical information that said over 60% of business leaders had been Prefects in schools and maybe this shows that they had an innate ability from an early age. As someone that carries out research, I am a little sceptical of figures like this. I would like to know how many Prefects come out of school and don't go on to hold leadership positions!

I think the question is a little like asking, are good communicators born? To answer this we have to define what we mean by "communicate". Everyone has the ability to communicate, for the majority of us it is through speech but we also use body language, sign language and the written format, to name a few. We also have different languages and some people can speak a few languages and within that there is a range of accents and dialects. Then we have people who are really good at being able to articulate what they are saying and are really outstanding in their enunciation.

So to simply say, are communicators born, depends on what we mean by the word 'communicators'. We are all communicators but each of us develop our communication ability in different ways and to different levels.

I would say the same about leaders. I think we are all born with the ability to lead, the question is, to what level we are able to develop being a leader. I believe that Mothers bringing up children, are leaders and it is probably one of the most important leadership roles in the world.

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have denied that in the traditional way of interpreting leadership.

The real question should be, to what level and in what conditions am I able to use my ability to lead? In what area can I be most effective as a leader? And more importantly, when does my ability to lead come to an end?

This then takes us to the question, can leadership be taught or can someone be taught how to be a leader? The truth is you can't teach someone to be a leader but leadership can be learned.

That is a powerful statement. I cannot teach you how to lead but you can develop the ability to lead through your willingness to learn and desire to develop yourself as a leader. To go back to my example of being a Mother and that bringing up children is one of the most important leadership roles in the world, parenting, motherhood or fatherhood is not something that is taught but it is something that can be learned.

Does that mean that parenting classes are of no value? of course not. Leadership courses can be of value, however, the training or teaching is not a guarantee of success. In the same way that you can be taught the words of a language and how to write them, etc. You can't be taught the language. You can only learn the language. The way you apply what you learn to be able to communicate, is what you learn over and beyond what you were taught. Mothers and Fathers can be taught good practice in bringing up children, but the application of that is down to their learning.

So leaders are born every day and in each child that comes into the world. Each one can learn to develop their ability to lead and, as a result, they will discover the level they can take that

ability and in what conditions they can apply it.

Most fail at realising when their ability has come to an end and that they need to pass on the baton to others. That is another story!!!!

So this months questions are:

- How good are you at learning to lead?
- Are you so trapped in what you are doing that you are not actively learning to develop your ability to lead?
- How are you structuring your learning?
- Do you know your preferred learning style and make best use of it to ensure that you are taking every opportunity to learn?

Finally, is there someone trying to teach you, but you are not listening? Your best teachers are the people around you that give you feedback each and every day.

Recently I interviewed a very successful entrepreneur in Toronto Canada. Frank Ciancuilli has been highly successful in business and I asked him about the qualities of a leader. If you download this Thoughts on Leadership on audio or video, you will be able to see a short clip from my interview with Frank this month.

Have a great month and best wishes

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