

A MUCH-NEEDED FRESH LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVE**By Philip Struble**

Entrepreneurs and small business owners – even leaders at midsize and large companies – tend to suffer from the same problem: They want to control all the decisions at their company. Bosses are often under the impression they have achieved their standing today due to their excellent decision-making skills.

While this may be true to a certain extent, if we only ever consider your own perspective, we will miss out on some excellent ideas and solutions. Fresh perspectives almost always come from listening to others. Actively seeking support from people who think differently brings fresh energy to our issues. This applies to product design, company operations, and just about everything else that involves decision-making.

Here are several advantages to listening to others:

1. **Becoming more objective** – It is easy to create an echo chamber if we only listen to our partners and keep making decisions as always (status quo).
2. **Reassessing our points of view** – There may be things we take for granted – when they are actually just our opinions. Someone challenging those beliefs can reveal new possibilities.
3. **Breaking old habits** – Inviting fresh perspectives into our decision-making can mix things up and push us to take risks that will benefit our business in the long run.
4. **Benefiting from experience** – ideas from outside our areas of expertise can bring some of the most creative solutions.
5. **Developing flexibility** – Forcing ourselves to try something new pushes us out of our comfort zones and requires us to become flexible.
6. **Creating leaders** – Actively asking employees for their opinions lets them know we want to hear from them.
7. **Focusing on what matters** – Taking a step back and asking others their thoughts will allow us to see everything in a new light.

In the Bible it says, “The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes” (Psalm 19:8). Perspective is like looking through a lens through which we see. We are familiar with being on a hilltop, surveying the surrounding landscape, and getting a better perspective of how different landmarks relate to each other. Similarly, we each have a position – a perspective – from which we view life.

That perspective may be defined as our understanding of the relative importance of things. Our perspective will affect how we perceive and respond to the world around us; it influences our attitudes toward relationships, work, money, and life itself. Others can sharpen our perspectives.

Jesus referred to the importance of having a healthy perspective. In His famous Sermon on the Mount, He challenged His listeners’ understanding, giving them a new way of looking at many aspects of life. He stated, “The eye is the light of the body. So, if your eye is healthy,

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your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness" (Matthew 6:22-23). The way we see things is not just important – it is critical.

But how will we know if our perspective is healthy, as Jesus said? If individual circumstances can influence our perspective, we can benefit from others who see things differently. Beyond that, we have God's Word as a guide. King David of Israel wrote about God's Word as giving direction and clarity of vision in our lives: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105).

Philip W. Struble is President of Landplan Engineering. He is passionate about helping business leaders steward their companies in a way that honors God. The author of Zebedee and Sons Fishing Co: Business Advice from the Bible, he hosts a weekly blog at www.zebedeeandsonsfishingco.com. Philip and his wife, Stephanie, have four adult children and currently reside in Douglas County, Kansas, USA.

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. If you are in a position of leadership, how do you make decisions? Do you typically rely on your own judgment, or do you actively seek out the ideas and input from others? Explain your answer.
2. Have you ever worked for – or with – someone who insisted on making their own decisions without consulting you or others to check the validity of their conclusions? If so, how did that make you feel? Did it affect your feelings about how that individual valued you, your ideas and insight?
3. To gain the perspectives of others, it is essential to actively listen to what they think and have to say. Which of the advantages of listening to others cited by Mr. Struble seem most significant?
4. He also writes about the Bible being a helpful guide in gaining and maintaining a proper perspective on many areas of life, including our workplace decisions. Do you agree, and if so, in what ways?

Challenge for This Week

It is helpful to periodically seek the perspectives of others, including whether they think our perspectives are accurate and properly balanced. Sometime this week, meet with a trusted friend or accountability group and invite their feedback on whether they see you as an active, sincere listener who is open to other points of view.

Depending on how they respond, decide whether your perspectives might benefit from some adjustments.

NOTE:

For more about what the Bible says, consider the following passages:

Proverbs 11:14, 12:15, 15:22, 18:13, 19:20,27, 20:18, 24:5-6, 25:11, 27:17

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