The Individual Responsibility of Corporate Social Responsibility

By Terence H. Biggs II
CEO, Marketplace Dynamics Leadership Development Group
Co-Author, THE DNA OF GUTSY LEADERS

Corporate Social Responsibility is entrusted to corporate leadership, and can be only as effective or ineffective as the next group of college graduate trained to become the next generation of corporate leaders. When I conduct leadership development training, I teach about **The Law of the Lid,** which states, as a leader's lid *(a leader's leadership potential)* increases, their effectiveness as a leader also increases. Raising the leader's lid simultaneously raises the lid of the leader's organization and the lid of the leader's followers. If you want to influence the social responsibility of an organization the leader's lid must be raised.

What percentage of your **potential** do you feel you're currently using? Potential is defined as latent/dormant qualities/abilities that **may** be developed and lead to future success or usefulness. Potential has to be defined and developed, and there is no magic formula for achieving it. If we could **change** a person's potential percentage and increase it by 10-30%, that would make a staggering difference in every area of their lives. It is said that people **change** when 3 things happen:

1.   When we **know enough**
2.   When we **care enough**
3.   When we have **hurt enough**

As someone in the people business, I look at Corporate Social Responsibility not starting with the end product in mind *(a socially responsible corporation)*; instead, *I* start with the raw materials (people) in my mind's forefront.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a form of business **self-regulation**. The 3 Ps of CSR are referred to as the triple bottom line.
   • **Profit** (Economically sound)
   • **People** (Socially responsible)
   • **Planet** (Environmentally responsible)

A corporation's **social responsibility report card** is tied to its corporate leadership.
Responsibility is something you should do because it is morally right or legally required. Synonyms for the word responsibility are: Authority, Control, Power, and **LEADERSHIP.** Since synonyms can be substituted one for another, we can conclude that the study of Corporate Social Responsibility should not be conducted without the study of Corporate Social Leadership.

What is Leadership? My coach and mentor, Dr. John Maxwell, in his book, "The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership" puts it this way, in Law #2 - The Law of Influence, *"The true measure of leadership is INFLUENCE - Nothing more, Nothing Less."* Without influence, you will never be able to lead others. Influence cannot be awarded, appointed, assigned or mandated. **Influence must be earned!**

Five Ingredients of Leadership:

1. Character - (This speaks to *who we are*)
It begins with the inner person...your inner GPS...and includes morals, values, faith, beliefs, conscience, ethics, convictions, common sense, emotions, and our interpretations of right and wrong. **It is the stuff we learned at home, church, in the community, and at school.**

One Powerful Quote to describe character is:

"We are all tattooed in the crib with the beliefs of our tribe." ~ *Oliver Wendell* Holmes

2. Relationships – (This speaks to *who we know*)
You're a leader only if you have followers. Getting followers requires the development of relationships. Relationships must be cultivated, pruned, nurtured and prioritized. *"He that thinketh he leadeth, and hath no one following, is only taking a walk."* – Dr. John Maxwell. One is too small a number for greatness!

3. Knowledge – (This speaks to *what we know*)
Knowledge alone will not make the leader, but without it you cannot be a leader. You must know the way in order to lead the way.

4. Intuition - (This speaks to *what we feel*)
Leadership requires more than just a command of data *(facts & figures)*. Leaders seek to recognize and influence intangibles such as **energy, morale, timing, and momentum**. A leader has to be able to discern when something simply feels wrong *(gut check)* and hear their internal GPS saying: "**Recalculating**!"

5. Experience – (This speaks to *where we've been*)
Experience does not guarantee credibility, but it encourages people to give us a chance to prove that we are capable. **Example**: If you are going to lead me on the battlefield of war, I don't want to see you pull out a book entitled, "Battlefield Strategies for Dummies."

There are "5 Basic Myths About Leadership"and the following is one myth:
Myth #1 - The Management Myth: Management vs. Leadership
Leadership is about influencing people to follow and management focuses on maintaining systems and processes. In a car, if management is the engine, tire, breaks, etc., then leadership is the driver (navigator) that is setting the coarse...the destination!

Strong gutsy leadership potential is in some people's DNA.

- **DNA:**
  - **D** = Difference Maker *(When we show up everything changes)*
  - **N** = Never Give Up *(Sometimes you win and sometimes you learn)*
  - **A** = Add value to others *(We are people of value that value people)*

When students graduate and enter the workforce their corporate social responsibility is to:
- Make names for themselves
- Build up networks of influence
- Shatter glass ceilings
- Earn the respect of peers
- Live lives of decency, honesty, fairness, and respect
- Pursue promotions to key decision making positions so their individual responsibility can translate into corporate social responsibility

Corporate social responsibility begins with our **individual** responsibility.
  - Individual influence, participation and involvement is needed in order for corporations to be socially responsible.
  - You cannot have socially responsible corporations without socially responsible corporate leadership.
  - You cannot expect responsible social leadership if those in leadership were never developed. It's like planting corn and then complaining that you did not get a harvest of strawberries.

In the technology field there is an acronym: *GIGO (Garbage in; Garbage out)*. In leadership training I've developed a similar acronym: *PLi=PLo (Poor Leadership in; Poor Leadership out)*

Part of my purpose is to **change** how people see Corporate Social Responsibility by beginning to **change** how they see themselves, and challenge them to access more of their potential. By accessing more of their potential and raising their leadership lid, they will live lives of service that will make a difference in the lives of others. To quote Muhammad Ali: *"Service to others is the rent you pay for your room while here on earth."*

*What percentage of your **corporate social responsibility potential** will you now aspire to tap into?*