

WHO'S BAD?

A JOLLY GOOD QUESTION FOR LEADERS

by Stéphane Lhuillier

I posted this photo on my Facebook page couple of days ago and got thrilled by the attention it received. Michael Jackson silhouette and music remain much vivid in our memories indeed. Besides, the question set by his song title is also very much alive for leaders: *Who's bad?*



Most of the leaders I have been working with have asked me at some point: *I feel like being perceived as bad by my staff, how come?*

Some people are fundamentally bad as they seek their own satisfaction from creating despair in other people while giving a positive social image. Leaders with good intentions are often perceived as bad simply because they don't match people's needs and expectations. Why is it so? Simply because they lead change.

Bad is a judgment. A judgment placed on a person by someone else, who uses her/his own beliefs and needs. And as human beings, we all have the same fundamental question: will I die or be abandoned tomorrow? Thus, our inclination to seek security and, as a matter of consequence, to believe stability is one response to security. And to our own survival.

HERE COMES THE POINT

Leaders lead change towards a better future. They envision this future and mobilize their people for it. Doing so, they embark everyone on a discovery journey. A journey nobody has ever been. This is pretty scary for most persons but the change addicts. The usual reactions and comments leaders can hear while leading change are: our leader is wrong, it can't be a good direction, it doesn't make sense, I don't believe in this, our leader is bad!

If you, as a leader, hear these comments from your staff, this is actually good news! These comments are a good indication that you are creating change. If you're not hearing them, make sure to be in contact with your staff. And if you are, you might wish to reconsider the magnitude and/or the speed of change. You ought to hear these comments to make sure you create change. As long as your intentions are good!

WHAT SHOULD I DO WHEN PEOPLE SAY I AM BAD?

However fast and important the change you lead, you anyway need to find ways to reassure your staff that the future you envision is the best one. You want to keep them on-board.

HOW TO REASSURE YOUR PEOPLE?

By being consistent. Consistent in your words and actions, do what you say, become predictable, and say what you do. Communicate, communicate, communicate, and do... Communicate your vision, communicate your short-term wins, meet people and share with them the future you want to create together. Change addicts will form your first coalition, the other people will gradually follow as long as they are reassured.

AND REASSURE YOURSELF

Because you are a human being also, with the same basic needs and fundamental question, reassure yourself. Manage your own fears. Don't panic over all the negative comments and reactions you might hear around you. View them as positive signals. Because, at the end of the day, they tell you that you are making a real difference.