



Compelling Authenticity, by Dee Hock

At one time I got interested in trying to understand how great leaders created enormous social change -- take Christ, take Muhammad, Gandhi, Mother Teresa, Joan of Arc, Martin Luther King, Jr. When you look back at their history, almost without exception they were nobodies. Nobody! Gandhi was just a mediocre attorney who got thrown off a train into the dust by the British because he was Indian. Mother Teresa -- just an ordinary nun. And so I studied -- what made their ideas so compelling? Their ideas weren't that unique. In fact, they were often pretty traditional. Why, then, did their articulation of their beliefs have such profound effect? What I discovered was something that I think is almost universally true. They really examined what was happening around them, and examined all the existing institutions, and saw with clearer vision. They didn't delude themselves about it. Furthermore, they had the capacity to project themselves into the future and deal with the four aspects that I think are essential to understanding anything: how things were (history), how they are today, how they might become or where they're heading, and how they ought to be. They had the capacity to take that larger question of "how things ought to be" into the future and decide how they ought to be. Now, the interesting thing is that almost without exception, they didn't start by preaching it. They started by living as though it were already true. They profoundly changed their way of living and said, "I don't have to live the way I am now." Mother Teresa said, "I can pick up a beggar in the street and tell him God loves him and help him die with respect and dignity. That I can do." Right? So once they began to live as though what ought to be was true, they had an authenticity that was just compelling. Complexity theory would call it a strange attractor, a legitimacy, an authenticity. And then they talked about it. They never wavered, no matter what the obstacle, or what the condemnation. And many of them died because they couldn't live any other way. Some of them were killed. I don't think they were unique. I think that capacity is in every single living human being. We just have to get in touch with it. And begin. --Dee Hock, founder of VISA International (more [<http://www.wie.org/j22/hock.asp>])