



The Leadership Wisdom Of Kung Fu

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You may not remember the hit TV series from the 70s that traced the adventures of a Shaolin Monk, Kwai Chang Caine (played by the late David Carradine) as he wanders the American West armed only with his spiritual training and skill in Kung Fu. But, if you were a young boy back then, as I was, there was really nothing better on TV!



The show aired on ABC from 1972 through 1975. The 63 episodes that comprised the series all followed a familiar format – innocent hero is unfairly challenged and through his own skill and grace overcomes great odds. While the show had many fight scenes that showcased Carradine's Kung Fu experience (apparently he held a Brown belt in Kung Fu at the time), it also always offered the viewer ancient wisdom that Caine acquired while studying as a child under his mentor, the blind Master Po.

When I go back and watch some of these episodes (now available on DVD), I'm amazed at how good these messages are and how many of them apply to the study and development of leadership talent. Here are the top 10 leadership lessons that can be gleaned from the '70s hit TV series:

1. ***The simplest things are the most difficult to see*** – Keep it simple stupid!
2. ***Great acts are made up of small deeds*** – An expected outcome of a purposeful leadership style.
3. ***Persistence under difficulties will win advantage*** – Perseverance is a leader's ace in the hole.

4. ***He who has no trust will not be trusted*** – Trust-building is a leader's responsibility.
5. ***The wise man avoids extremes and excesses*** – Everything in moderation, including risk-taking!
6. ***He who will lead must follow behind*** – The basic creed of the servant leader.
7. ***The wise man is guided by what he feels and not what he sees*** – Trusting your gut, is sometimes all a leader can depend on.
8. ***The more one gives to others the more he has*** – Responsible leaders account for the social impact of their decisions.
9. ***The foolish student laughs at knowledge*** – We see the importance of that thought every day, don't we?
10. ***He who walls his house sees no one*** – An open door policy promotes communication, transparency and trust.

Let me close, with an exchange between Caine and Master Po that appeared in the pilot episode of the series:

Master Po: *Close your eyes. What do you hear?*

Young Caine: *I hear the water, I hear the birds.*

Po: *Do you hear your own heartbeat?*

Caine: *No.*

Po: *Do you hear the grasshopper which is at your feet?*

Caine: *Old man, how is it that you hear these things?*

Po: *Young man, how is it that you do not?*



This dialogue highlights, in a subtle way, the mental and spiritual command required to become an exceptional person – and, ultimately, a respected leader – that the show espoused. Be sure to check it out! And, for assistance on developing leaders in your organization, please contact me directly. I can't wait to help.