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FEBRUARY 2010 NEWSLETTER

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“In the personal-best cases that we collected, people frequently talked about the need to get everyone on board...to get extraordinary things done, everyone had to fervently believe in and commit to a common purpose.”

--from *The Leadership Challenge, 4th Edition* by Jim Kouzes & Barry Posner

## Welcome to The Leadership Challenge Newsletter!

This monthly publication shares stories, examples, and information about the impact of The Leadership Challenge in all kinds of organizations. As always, please let us [know how we are doing](#); we may even contact you about featuring your ideas and stories in future editions of this newsletter.

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### Save the Date!

The Leadership Challenge Forum 2010 will taking place **August 5-6, in San Diego, CA.**

[See Details](#)

[Early-Bird Registration](#) for TLC Forum 2010

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### Thoughts on the Model

Is your top talent really on board? Or will they fly at the first sign of a full economic recovery? Steve Coats examines research that suggests disturbing trends in employee engagement and details what it takes to lead effectively in good times and bad. [More](#)

### Tips and Techniques

Using The Five Practices as a solid foundation for organizational response and recovery from workplace violence to natural disasters, crisis leadership consultant Gordon Meriwether lays out a proven technique to help leaders prepare to lead in times of uncertainty and chaos. [More](#)

### Ask an Expert

Barry Posner explores the nature of the LPI frequency scale as he offers advice on how to most effectively communicate to leaders and observers what the questionnaire results really mean. [More](#)

## **Rants and Raves**

Is trust as important to leaders in Kansas as in Hong Kong? Can Julia Child's perspective on learning the art of French cooking offer universal leadership lessons? Follow Barry Posner on his blog as he travels, teaches, and explores leadership around the world. [More](#)

## **What We're Watching**

### **Leadership at the Movies: Nelson Mandela and The Leadership Challenge**

Morgan Freeman and Clint Eastwood have created another very special movie now playing across North America. [Invictus](#) is the story of Nelson Mandela's early days as President of South Africa, and particularly how he viewed the country's Rugby team, the Springboks, and an upcoming World Cup event to be held in South Africa as an opportunity to bring the country together.

The year is 1995. Mandela (Freeman) is in his first term as President. He recognizes the tremendous challenges facing his government in a land torn apart by apartheid. Racial tensions are at an all-time high, people are struggling with the effects of crippling unemployment, and a new government made up predominantly of black leaders has shifted the balance of political power.

Mandela senses that the World Cup, to be held in South Africa, might present a unique opportunity to bring blacks and whites together with pride in a winning home team. Traditionally, whites cheered enthusiastically for the Springboks at every game while the black population cheered for anyone *but* the home team, feeling that the team, and even the game itself, represented all that was white and oppressive in South Africa.

The Leadership Challenge and The Five Practices permeate Freeman's portrayal of Mandela: his quiet, reflective confidence, his commitment to lead from values, the personal connection Mandela makes with everyone he meets. All are evidence of his skill, for example, in calmly *Modeling the Way*.

One iconic scene features Mandela's first meeting with Francois Pienaar, a white Afrikaner and the Springboks' captain, played beautifully by Matt Damon. Invited to meet the President at Government House, Pienaar arrives with trepidation, uncertain of the reason for the meeting. But Mandela's personal style, his warmth, the way he treats everyone around him with such respect and appreciation completely charms Pienaar, who leaves with the realization that something very significant has just happened to him. During their brief but meaningful time together, Mandela has skillfully *Inspired a Shared Vision* about the importance and meaning of a Springboks win to South Africa.

Mandela is portrayed *Challenging the Process* as he consistently challenges his staff to think differently about issues and policies. For example, he challenges his black head of security to ensure that his black staff works collaboratively with their more experienced white colleagues. How they learn to work together as a single team, both cheering for the Springboks, provides one of several great sub-texts to the story.

Mandela also challenges Pienaar to think positively and creatively about the possibility of a World Cup win, even though the odds are stacked against them. Mandela's personal commitment and his quiet leadership allow Pienaar to begin to see the long shot as a possibility, thus *Enabling him to Act*, to lead his team to train harder than ever.

Another of The Five Practices, *Encourage the Heart*, is also clearly demonstrated in several scenes. For instance, Mandela's staff shows great love for him, honoring him by affectionately calling him Mandiba, the name of the

clan of which he is a member. In turn, Mandela shows great interest in each member of his staff--as individuals; he knows everyone by name, asks about their families, shows appreciation for everything they do for him. In one scene, Damon's character watches Mandela with admiration as he introduces and speaks with a woman who has brought in the tea. In another memorable scene, Mandela quietly memorizes the names of each of the Springboks players so he can give them each a personal greeting.

Like many others who have seen *Invictus*, I was totally captivated by this movie and all it can teach us about leadership, courage, and building and sustaining relationships. By any measure, the lessons to be learned are less about a team that comes from behind to win the championship, but rather about the leadership, vision, courage, and commitment it took to build a unified country against steep odds.

For additional inspiration, follow this [YouTube link](#) to view a powerful interview with rugby team captain Francois Pinnear who, in his own words, provides insight into the life-transforming impact one effective leader can have on another.

Also available on YouTube, an important [historical perspective](#) on the significance of the World Cup match in South Africa, presented in this video narrated by Morgan Freeman. The symbolism of this event offers a wonderful example of how truly effective leaders demonstrate the courage of their convictions and take stands when even their most ardent supporters are opposed.

Beverley Simpson is principal of Toronto-based Beverley Simpson Associates and a Certified Master of The Leadership Challenge®. A nurse by training, she specializes in people, teams, and systems development in healthcare. She can be reached at [bevsimp@gmail.com](mailto:bevsimp@gmail.com).

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