

Are You a Genius?

by **Margaret J. Marcuson**

- - a monthly reflection on the imaginative challenges facing leaders today

How are you unique? Recently, I was at the National Gallery in Washington, DC. It was a Friday morning; the museum was almost empty except for some school groups, and I was able to wander from room to room without distraction. I was struck by the way the work of certain artists is instantly recognizable. Rembrandt. Rodin. Vermeer.

As we develop, as leaders and as human beings, we become more like ourselves and less like anyone else. Our unique identity is our genius, our contribution. We may go through a period of imitating someone else, particularly when we are younger. Still, our greatest contribution comes after we have learned who we are and know what mark we want to make on the world.

Some artists had a group of followers, and the museum identifies some paintings as "school of--" But most of those followers are forgotten. The genius in the art comes from a unique vision. And all leaders have their own genius, if they can find their way toward it. Only when we know who we are and what we believe, can we truly begin to lead.

The greatest genius brings forth the genius of others, when we lead and teach in a way that resonates with our followers. How to tap into our own genius and that of others? Spend more time thinking about our own values, principles and goals than we do reading about others' ideas. Find a way to share clearly those values, principles and goals with those we lead. Listen to the response of others, looking for the genius they bring.

Genius does not emerge overnight, in us or in those we lead. It may also show up in unexpected ways (a genius for technology, a genius for relationships, a genius for humor). But the more deeply we develop our own unique identity, the more we will be able to have the kind of impact we hope for.

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