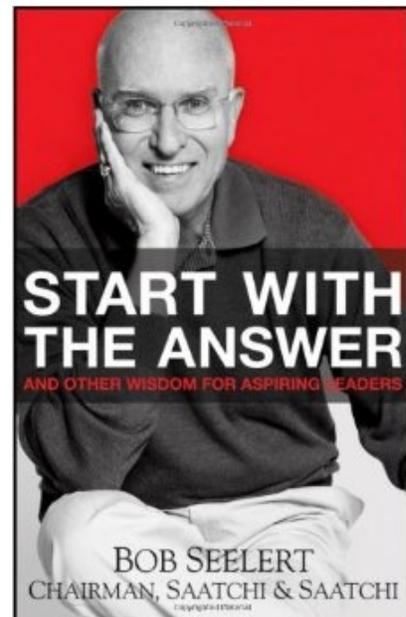


## Start With the Answer: Authentic Leadership

By Tom O'Shea, CMC, Organizational Agility Practice Leader

**A few weeks ago, I had a very special opportunity that refilled my enthusiasm tank for promoting real, authentic leadership.** Have you ever had the privilege of working with someone who fully exemplified the kind of role model leader that the heavy weights in leadership literature write about? Hopefully many of you can answer affirmatively to that question and are recalling some of the best moments in those memories. Unfortunately, not all leaders-in-the making today have that privilege and even fewer are able to get the kind of personal mentoring that happened once upon a time when things were not quite as frenetic, turbulent before LEVEL 5 VUCA became a norm.

My replenishing moment took place up in Wilton, CT where I was conducting a two-day Leadership Agility workshop with a cohort of high potential leaders from a well-known consumer products company not far from the residence of one of my former mentors, Bob Seelert. Bob and I worked together over twenty years ago when he became CEO of Kayser-Roth Corporation and provided his highly impactful style of leadership to truly “shape the future” with strong lessons in how to create clarity, unity and agility in those things that really matter. Bob had been President of several General Foods brands beforehand and went on afterwards to become CEO and Chairman of Saatchi & Saatchi – helping to refocus and re-energize the world’s largest advertising and marketing company.



At my recent dinner with Bob and Mike Richardson, one of my partners who lives in San Diego, I got an immediate resurgence of the impact true leaders can bring to inspire and grow individual potential. A few years ago, Bob wrote a book called “[START WITH THE ANSWER](#)” – a book filled with short stories and pearls of wisdom that Bob wanted to pass along to other aspiring leaders. I use many of Bob’s pearls in my workshops on leadership all the time ... there are many. That evening Bob shared something very special as a gift – a copy of his remarks as the keynote speaker at Cambridge University in England on the occasion of their 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary (almost unfathomable). In his remarks to the Cambridge audience, he shared his perspective on leadership and many of the barriers that he sees. I used his last paragraph from these remarks in my workshop opening the following day and thought I would share here also:

*“Finally, the biggest barrier of all is that companies today have too much MANAGEMENT and not enough LEADERSHIP. Management is all about planning, directing, measuring and controlling. Leadership, on the other hand, is all about standing for something and taking your company into the fray under that banner. A leader has to know the values, beliefs, principles and practices he/she stands for and then consistently adhere to them. For me, those things have always been a belief in the long term, in growth, in continuous improvement and in ensuring the organizations of which I am a part consistently are in a position to out-compete their peer group. Knowing who I am and having these kinds of guideposts are the things that have helped ensure I do the right things when leading in tough times and they are the things that let my people know where I’m coming from and what they can expect.”*

Thanks Bob for what you have meant to me over the years and the many other lives you have impacted. I think the real ANSWER we need to START WITH ... involves this kind of genuine, authentic and values based leadership which guides and enables the whole crew to navigate through the uncertain waters of the future. This is the kind of dialogue we can expect at the upcoming HUMAN CAPITAL INSTITUTE SUMMIT next week in New Orleans. Your comments and discussion are welcomed.



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