

Yin & Yang Leaders: How Are They Different?

Myths & truths about leading



Leadership development coach Lisa Marshall says that our business schools are not teaching young people the critical skills necessary to become tomorrow's mature leaders. Instead, they focus on short-term productivity, with little or no consideration of the consequences (Yang).

What are the distinctions between Yin and Yang and why do they matter?

MYTH: A for-profit leader's job is to make money for his stakeholders, however that is defined. A not-for-profit leader's job is to ensure the long-term survival of the organization.

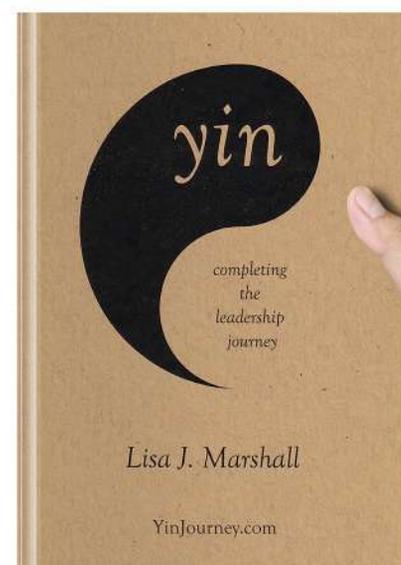
TRUTH: Work should be a place where employees' hearts get used and nourished, so that they have plenty to give when they get home. A mature Yin leader creates opportunities at work for people to feel passionate about what they are doing and to experience themselves as full of potential and fully present on the job, while asking questions and exploring possibilities that haven't been considered before. For example, what is the right thing to do ethically and morally, for the good of the team, the division, the organization, the community, and the planet?

MYTH: A true leader, one who is dynamic, charismatic, and dominant (aka Yang)—is irreplaceable. When he or she leaves, it's likely that the organization will fall apart.

TRUTH: A mature Yin leader always has a healthy leadership pipeline because the people around her feel and are competent, capable, and committed. The organization is not dependent on one specific person for its survival; rather, the goals are imprinted on the hearts of all, and if needed, people will step up and keep things moving in the right direction.

MYTH: Great leaders never admit they make mistakes.

TRUTH: You have grown into a leadership role when you are able to publicly own your missteps, while continuing to set high behavioral standards. Mature Yin leaders aren't afraid to apologize. And they keep the organization moving forward at the same time. A mature leader values the kinds of effort that produce continual learning (as well as increased levels of competence).



For more information contact



Mari Selby
540-851-0864

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