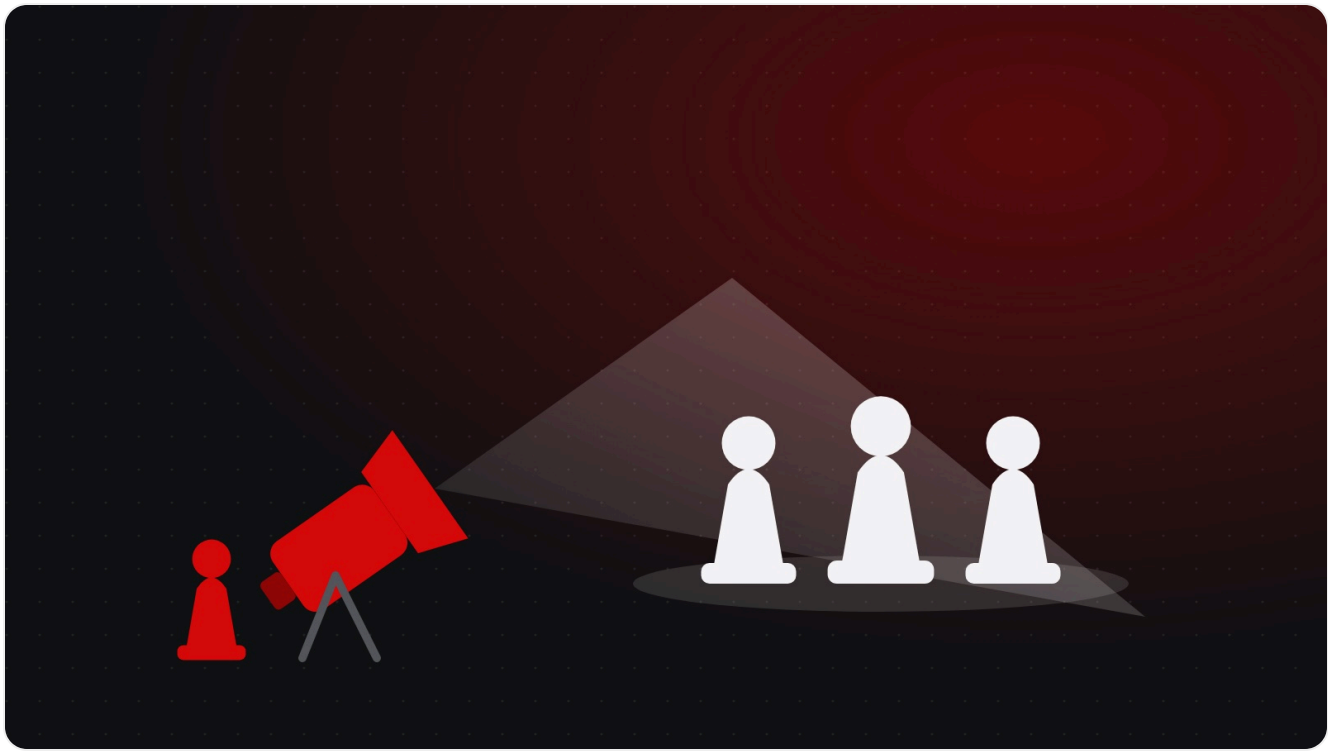
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# The Best Leaders Are Supporting Characters.



By Tommy Lee



Here is a leadership idea I have been wrestling with recently. It's "the best leaders embrace the role of supporting character."

Resource Global has grown bigger than I ever thought it would. And it would be so easy to sit back and think, look what I built, look how great I am, I made this happen. But the second I make it about me, I stop seeing the people who actually got us here.

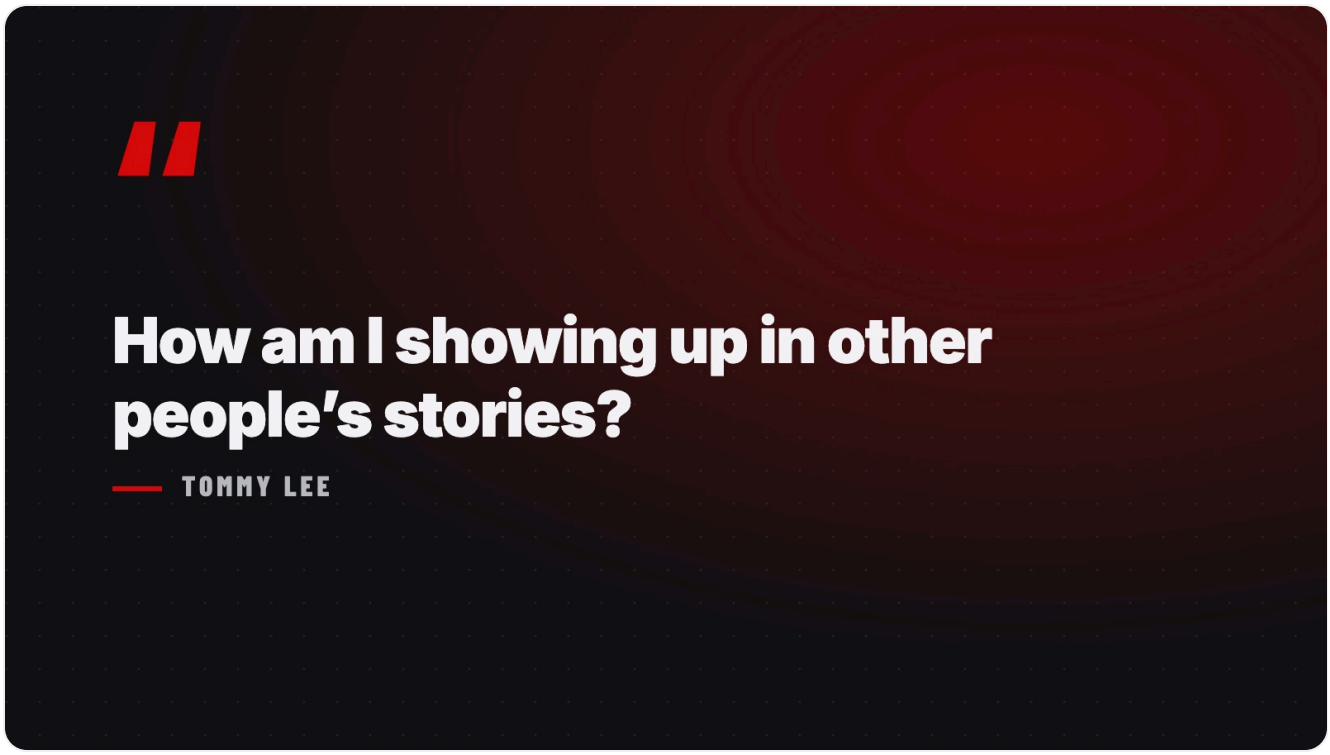
In a recent Harvard Business Review article it mentioned a phrase called "naive realism." Essentially it's that if you keep getting consumed with yourself, you slowly go blind to it. You start believing you really are that good. I see this happen in the Christian world so much. And here is the reality of this though. Some leaders really are that skilled. They can build something real. That is exactly what makes it dangerous. The success is true, so the story you tell yourself feels true.

But when a leader casts himself as the main character, the team quietly falls apart. Trust drops. People do worse work. Nobody gives their best to someone who needs to be the hero of every story. No one wants to work with someone who takes all the credit.

You see this all the time in the church world. A pastor has real preaching gifts, the seats start filling, and soon the thought creeps in, that the people are here because I am good. It eventually becomes all about you. "God has given me a gift and I have to steward it well," as I once heard a pastor say to me. You walk into a church, you take a membership class, and you literally say you will submit to the authority of the pastor and elders (that's what churches teach, don't they?). In meetings everyone looks to you to make the final decision. You are so used to everything revolving around you that you soon start making it about you. And if you are not careful it gets to your head. That's why pastors and ministry leaders are terrible collaborators. They are so used to running their own church and having everyone defer to them that they don't know what it means to partner with others. They don't know how to make compromises because they are so stuck on their idea being the best.

Social media makes it worse. You need social media but it feeds into the ego. I need to use social media to bring awareness to the wonderful work of Resource Global. But the same tool that spreads the word will also whisper that your worth is your follower count and your number of hits. If you are not careful, it stops being a tool and instead becomes a mirror you cannot stop looking into. Pretty soon you are looking at who liked your post and why so and so didn't like your post but they liked someone else's post.

People think they flourish by focusing on themselves, but the opposite is true. We are most effective and most fulfilled when we are serving others and actively giving power away. Supporting character energy is really just decentering yourself and asking a different question. How am I showing up in other people's stories?




Think about the two kinds of bosses. One takes the credit when things go well and hands you the blame when they do not. I have worked for that person. I never want to be in that situation again. The other one points at the team when it works, and when it falls apart, he stands up and says, that one is on me, I should have done better. That is who you want to follow.

My friend Dave Evans, who wrote Designing Your Life, told me once that purpose is the new currency. Everyone is looking for it. And when you are genuinely curious about someone, you are handing them purpose. You are saying, I do not know everything, but you know things I do not, so help me understand, because what you carry matters to this team.

> ***The best leaders embrace the role of supporting character. Point at the team. Take the blame. Give people purpose. Get out of the center.***

But I will add one thing though. Once in a while, you still have to lead. Once in a while you have to make the call and take the shot nobody else will. Being a supporting character most of the time does not mean you never step forward. It means that when you do, it is not about you.

*Tommy*

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