

The Art of Leadership

The most important quality of leadership, the one quality for which you want to be known, is extraordinary performance, with the goal of achieving extraordinary results. These results then serve as an inspiration to others to perform at equally exceptional levels. People ascribe leadership to those men and women who they feel can most enable them to achieve important goals or objectives.

What is the recipe for effective leadership?

Is it "Vision" or "Mission"? When you thoroughly analyze the top job practitioners, the result would essentially funnel down to only one thing, i.e., the directions shown by the leadership. Leadership is a bonding between a person and a group augmented with the skills to direct and guide the group to surge towards success.

Warren Bennis' definition of leadership is focused much more on the individual capability of the leader: "Leadership is a function of knowing yourself, having a Vision that is well communicated, building trust among colleagues and taking effective action to realize your own leadership potential."

Winston Churchill once said, "Courage is rightly considered the foremost of the virtues, for upon it all others depend." The courage is one of the fundamental requirements for leadership in any field. Fear or the lack of courage is more responsible for failure in management, and in life, than any other factor. It is always fear that causes people to hold back, to sell themselves short, and to settle for far less than they are capable of!

First things first! People look up to leaders initially to obtain Direction. By knowing the organization's direction, people can fine-tune themselves to realize their goals. It is the leader's actions and decisions that drive the direction to the company. Providing direction for others is a key to creating effective leadership chemistry. Leaders must have Integrity and establish and live those values.

- Values keep the team together
- They let you empathize with the team
- Helps you align focus on the right objective
- Provide direction when things are in a flux

Another important ingredient to leadership quality is to maintain Consistency. When a leader changes direction with the market ethos, people stop following. People seek to have dependable leaders who provide a yardstick to benchmark in times of change. In a world where there is constant change, we need to swiftly shift and adapt. Leaders must always choose strategy, directions and values that stay stable even while adapting contextual and situational tactics.

People who follow the leadership style need to feel Connected always. Leaders try to maintain connectivity to their followers through shared values. When a leader doesn't live his/her values, the followers tend to leave. That's why people are found saying, "I haven't left the organization that I worked for. I have just left my boss!"

Leading doesn't have to be complicated. We probably already know how to do it, but are not effectively practicing it. Why is that? Probably we are missing out on the ATTITUDE part of the game! If we look at the five key facets of high performance leadership consciously we are

InfoStrike

guaranteed to transform ourselves into a great leader. The trick of the trade lies in how well we adapt and master all the five characteristics.

These aforementioned five key characteristics work extremely well whether the emphasis is on 'quality' or any other approach to build and sustain a customer focused, team based organization that pays as much attention to results as it does to process to nurture and build a high performance organization.

Here are the other five key facets of High Performance Leadership:

Focus

Effective leaders stay focused on the outcomes they wish to create, and don't get too married to the methods used to achieve them. They provide this 'outcomes focus' for their organization by emphasizing the mission, vision, values and strategic goals of their organization and at the same time building the capacity of their organizations to achieve them. This capacity building emphasizes the need to be flexible, creative and innovative and avoid becoming fossilized through the adoption of bureaucratic structures, policies and processes.

Authenticity

Leaders who are authentic attract followers, even leaders who are viewed as being highly driven and difficult to work for. Simply put, they are viewed as always being themselves...and therefore followers know what to expect from them and can rely on them, come thick or thin. Authenticity provides the leader with the currency to obtain 'buy-in' from key stakeholders, because it builds and maintains trust. Authenticity is the bedrock upon which the other facets are built.

Courage

The challenges facing leaders today are immense, and require great courage to overcome. Leaders are constantly being challenged by others, be it their own team, customers, the public or other stakeholders. Standing firm in the face of criticism, yet having the courage to admit when they are wrong, are hallmarks of courageous leaders. For example, shifting an organization from being introspective to becoming customer focused requires courage when people pay lip service to the new direction...it means calling people on their bluff.

Empathy

Effective leaders know how to listen empathetically...thus legitimizing others' input. By doing so, they promote consensus building, and build strong teams. They coach others to do the same, and so create a culture of inclusiveness. They tend to be great listeners who capitalize on the ideas of others, and provide recognition for these ideas, yet they don't get bogged down in overly complicated dialogue. While they create learning organizations that place a high value on dialogue and continuous feedback, they know when to take action, when to 'fish or cut bait', which brings us on to the final facet...

Timing

The one facet that can make or break a leader is in knowing when to make critical decisions and when not to. All of the other facets must be viewed as subservient to getting the timing of critical decisions right. There is a need to be focused, authentic, courageous and empathetic, but get the timing wrong on critical decisions and everything else stands to be nullified. Great leaders move with appropriate speed. They don't believe that everything must be done immediately...they know how to prioritize, and how to get their team to prioritize. As well,

InfoStrike

they engage in timely follow-through to ensure actions that are committed to happen in a well coordinated and timely way.

Is that all it takes to be a great leader?

These facets of high performance leadership are not exhaustive. Just as one would look at the facets of a diamond, upon closer observation other facets become observable. Any person can aspire to being a great leader by commencing with these facets.