

Leadership for the future

The key to being a great leader is understanding your people. Many of today's business owners and managers do the same thing day in and day out with the same people and with ultimately the same outcome. They have become so bogged down in the here and now that they have forgotten to take calculated risks, generate fresh ideas and act on them. Great leaders have mastered being present in the here and now whilst inventing the future.

Great organisations have great leaders and the first step to becoming a great leader is to have a vision of what your company will look like years from now. The second step is to get your people behind it. People will go beyond the call of duty when their leader paints a picture of the vision he or she is leading the team toward.

Step 1 of being a great leader is to get on well with others. We sometimes have to not only work with but motivate and keep on track personality styles that don't particularly suit our own which can be very frustrating. There are some important qualities to getting on with others:

1. Be open – react honestly to incoming information, express your own ideas and accept responsibility for your actions
2. Communicate on only work related issues if you don't like the person you are communicating with
3. Empathise with others – really put yourself in the other persons shoes
4. Treat all individuals with respect whether you agree with them or not
5. Focus on good points
6. Choose equality – all people are equal, regardless of their performance right now
7. Listen – really listen, maintain eye contact and focus on what is being said, not what your reply might be
8. Avoid imposing your expectations on others – ensure that you communicate the organisational expectations, not your own
9. Be supportive – teams work well in a non threatening environment where open communication is encouraged

10. Be positive – make others feel better about themselves and always have a positive image regarding outcomes

Anyone can be a great leader, you just need to focus on the talents of your people and help them develop in a way that leads towards your vision of the future. The recruitment industry is full of managers – planning, controlling, organising, commanding and co-ordinating people and activities to achieve a set outcome. Planning activities involve analysing the organisation's current situation including the external environment, identifying and prioritising appropriate organisational goals and determining the necessary actions required to achieve those goals. Organising activities include the identification and division of work required to accomplish the organisational goals. Leading is the way in which managers direct and influence their subordinates to perform the tasks necessary to achieve the goals. Finally, controlling activities involve the monitoring and evaluation of actual performance compared to standards set that will ensure that organisational goals are in fact being reached. Some individuals perform the tasks of being a manager better than others. Leadership is in fact part of the management process, however truly inspirational leaders spend more time leading and less time on the management process.

So what makes a great leader?

Expectations create reality. The way you lead teaches your people the way they must follow. Work should be fun. All great leaders demonstrate entrepreneurship and have the ability to work in a style that mixes the visionary with the practical. They excite their people and never lose sight of the vision. The leaders of tomorrow will spend less time on the traditional management functions of planning, controlling, directing and evaluating and more time facilitating – change, learning and self management. An important characteristic of a great leader is the ability gain team commitment. The way to do this is to talk about commitment then develop a total work en-

vironment where there is harmony between people and procedures. Make work a happy place to be by promoting the social aspect. Many of you still expect your employees to work 7.00am until 7.00pm – reward them with social activities outside of work and include partners.

Getting the best from high achievers in your organisation is sometimes difficult because some will plateau. The key to getting the best from them is first to identify and acknowledge their skills and then encourage change. Make sure your high achievers are not left marking time. They need to be challenged constantly. Provide special assignments and additional training – this will show your commitment to them. Always concentrate on the future to guard against them dwelling on yesterdays victories. Remember that high achievers demand continued attention. These individuals seek recognition for their achievements – so give it to them.

Leaders of tomorrow know the value in sharpening the saw. They understand the importance of constantly learning and self-development for themselves and their people. Encourage development whether job related or not. Set aside a training budget and utilise it for training of your people. They will appreciate and strive to improve as a result.

Finally, leadership greatness means that you create something that does not end with you. Ensure that you have a succession plan in place and encourage your people to step up to the challenge. ■



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