

September 26, 2005

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The Art of Leadership

In spite of all the leadership texts, containing a veritable plethora of theories about leadership (each of which is THE KEY), leadership remains a very individual concept, exercised in many diverse yet successful ways. There are some things we as individuals can do, if we want to develop our own individual leadership.

(PRWEB) September 25, 2005 -- In spite of all the leadership texts, containing a veritable plethora of theories about leadership (each of which is THE KEY), leadership remains a very individual concept, exercised in many diverse yet successful ways. Indeed, successful application always results in leadership.

Unsuccessful application is invariably counter-productive. So, is this another theory? No, but I will share some observations about where to look for leadership. It's my belief that although we may not be able to define it very precisely, we can recognize it when we see it.

We know that there are people called "formal leaders" and "informal leaders" in some of the literature. "Formal leaders" are by definition occupying positions of authority (i.e., a supervisory position) and that is sometimes their sole claim to leadership. "Informal leaders," on the other hand, exercise leadership from positions not formally designated for leadership, thus causing a problem for the organization. How the informal leader arises is curious, but it can often be caused by the lack of leadership in the "formal" position. But that doesn't mean that the "great man" theory takes place (that's the one that says when a crisis occurs and there's no one prepared to deal with it, someone will rise to the occasion and deal with it). Why is someone not in a leadership position given authority by the group in which they work to exercise leadership?

There are, of course, several answers to that question, so let's examine some of them. It may be that the one who is the leader is a confident (at least confidently-acting) person with a bit of charisma, thus one who offers logical answers to questions from the group, and who may have the ability to demonstrate that they have good ideas. We often see this in groups that begin by discussing particular problems; if no one is specifically "in charge," the leader who emerges is often the person who demonstrates the most passion about the topic.

Leaders who are passionate about their vision (they always have a vision), are careful to make sure everyone in the organization knows what that vision is. They will indoctrinate everyone so that it is not simply a vision, but a tangible part of the environment, so much so that it will go home with employees at night. Everything that flows, then, is a reflection of that vision, because the vision becomes the beacon that guides the actions of everyone in the organization.

There are some things we as individuals can do, if we want to develop our own leadership:

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1. A leader must keep focused on the primary goal for his/her company and not get distracted.
2. A leader surrounds himself/herself not with those who only agree with him or her, but with the right people for the job that needs done, and then trains them and provides them the tools to do the job.
3. A leader recognizes the benefits of having different personalities on the team. Not only do separate skill sets come with different personalities, but different approaches that are essential to a company's success.
4. A leader, having hired the right people, gets out of their way. If someone must micromanage them, then the company probably doesn't need them. This is not a big problem, however, since they won't stay anyway, if they are treated with so little respect.
5. A leader always consults a feedback loop in all processes to make sure things are working as expected and to make appropriate changes in a timely manner. Failure to do this will hasten the failure of an organization in total.
6. A leader knows when he/she has exceeded his or her limitations, and acknowledges it. Then gets help to overcome it.

Each of us has the capability to be a leader. We will only become effective leaders, however, when we lose our fear of making mistakes, and share responsibility for achievement of the goals of the organization. If those goals are our individual measures of achievement, then the organization will work to succeed and achieve; if they are not, we will be the transient leader that gets things going, but fails by failing to share credit and push for only the good of the organization.

By Ron Fory, The Leader's Institute, <http://www.leadersinstitute.com>

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