

Standing Side by Side

Principles of Effective Leadership

By Shawn M. Galloway

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We are all held accountable for our ability to not only achieve results, but also to exceed expectations. We believe this makes us great supervisors, managers or executives. It does not, however, make us great leaders.

Accomplishing goals through the efforts of others is a frequent description of management. If the goal is simply to delegate required tasks to others, then learning the art of management becomes one's immediate priority. As important as this is, it offers a limited perspective of a person's responsibility when overseeing a direct report's efforts. Gone are the days when demonstrating management competency secured employment and contributed to organizational growth.

The Key Is to Develop Others

Organizational executives no longer view success based solely on individual contributions. Success is now measured by one's ability to inspire and leverage discretionary effort toward the creation of transformative results, creating a culture that is passionate about and hungry for achievement.

Leadership should be viewed as the ability to inspire others to actively pursue what is perceived to be impossible. Think of it this way: Look around your office. How much of what surrounds you was likely once perceived as impossible by its creator's peers? Repeatedly developing innovative products, services or results rarely derives from the external demands of a boss.

One of the best gifts you can provide is to help another person shape the way s/he perceives a job and the world. A leader's goal should be to help someone think differently. John Quincy Adams once wrote, "If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."

Some might argue that placing stress upon another person can facilitate desirable outcomes. However, with the exception of the recent recession, leading to mass layoffs, the leading reason people leave their jobs is their direct supervisors. In addition, many suggest that massive layoffs are ultimately the consequence of poor management decisions. Nevertheless, when a manager demands more and more from employees, increases their stress, fails to demonstrate an interest in who they are and creates an undesirable employment environment, people will leave for greener fields and nicer bosses.

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Intrinsically Motivated Workforce Will Dominate

Inspiring and leveraging discretionary energy must be the focus of anyone attempting to transform results in safety or any important area of operations. When people want to, rather than have to, different results emerge. This also facilitates a change in group values and behaviors, increasing the likelihood of sustainability.

Even in the most difficult environments, a leader creates a sense of purpose and says, "Join me. We can do it. We can get there." When individuals trust and understand a leader's intentions, and witness behavior reinforcing the belief in the destination, crowds will follow. What do you do to create trust, to get to know your employees, what motivates them, and what and who is important to them? How do you demonstrate support for and belief in the destination?

If you cannot answer these questions with positive examples, how will you be an effective influence on employees? Influence is the catalyst that transforms a manager into a great leader. When groups are intrinsically inspired and have purpose and support, transformation occurs.

Obstacles to Leading

Obstacles are the things you see when you either do not believe in yourself or feel that you are not supported by others. Support is determined not by how you think and feel, but by what you say and do. Do not judge your support for excellence in operations by your beliefs in the impossible, but by employees' experiences of you behaviorally demonstrating that support. Support must be both behaviorally defined and aligned.

Ralph Waldo Emerson believed, "What you do speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say." When behaviors do not align (i.e., voice support, yet behave inconsistently), not only does the belief in the goal diminish, so do trust, credibility and the overall relationship.

What would support look like? When defined by what would be observed, measurement is





possible, facilitating an opportunity for leading indicators. Moreover, this helps progress the standard measurements of what is undesirable (e.g., cost of accidents, lost productivity) toward measuring what is desirable, resulting in a culture focused on achieving success rather than on avoiding and reducing failures.

When employees purposefully measure the indicators of support for the objective, they are focused more on what leadership is doing well, which increases attention on overall positive indicators. If support for safety is a desirable belief, what will you do to create the experiences which lead to communicated stories, reinforcing that support is happening? Beliefs cannot be forced, but they can be influenced.

The Journey to Excellent Leadership

There is no final destination on the path toward leadership excellence. Becoming an excellent leader is a journey,

not a destination. Additionally, becoming a great leader results more from an increased focus on who people are and what motivates them than it does from the results you want people to provide. The amount of time invested in understanding employees, what influences their behavior and motivates their desires, is directly proportional to the level of results that you will recognize from their effort.

The best leaders are often not in a leadership position or, at minimum, are influential without purposeful intention. Position in the organizational hierarchy, education and experience level are not prerequisites for becoming a great leader. If leadership is truly more about influence than position, all that is required is the ability to be influential.

Consider those who have been trusted and influential to you. Were they always the senior individuals with the highest education or the most experience? Sometimes, it is the child who encourages you to be a better par-

ent or a friend who inspires you to join a cause. Trust and caring are often key variables of excellent leaders.

More Means Less

The more influential people you develop, the less influential you will need to be. A leader's ability to establish relationship strength and build trust with employees will become an organization's most effective competitive advantage. As French poet Antoine de Saint-Exupery wrote, "If you want to build a ship, don't drum up the men to gather wood, divide the work and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea."

When effort is concentrated on influencing others, building trust and rallying around a cause, you create other leaders within the rank and file. A leader should create the vision, but the most important thing you should do is create a legacy of leadership. How deep and widespread this legacy becomes will depend on how influential of a leader you will be.