



Linda's Lessons on Leadership Series Lesson #1

Countless books, articles, and documentaries have been written in immeasurable volumes on the subject of leadership explaining the impact of leadership on the world and people. Yet, with all of this information made available, how then it is that so many still struggle with the issue of effective leadership? Questions are repeatedly asked, are leaders born or made? Are there particular styles and skills that leaders **MUST** have in order to be effective? What is leadership and what are the major issues facing this entity called Leadership in organizations, schools, churches and in society in general. Most certainly political leadership faces its challenges in a very visible and open society. How can leaders maximize their effectiveness to ensure that the issues of the day are resolved and those in their charge realize their full potential?

Jack Welch defined business leaders as individuals who can create and communicate a vision, bring passion to the vision while at the same time relentlessly pursue the vision to completeness. He also believes that “above all else, though, good leaders are open. They go up, down and around their organization to reach people. They’re informal. They’re straight with people and they never get bored telling their story” (Tichy & Charan, 1989, p. 3).

Leaders can motivate, inspire, be led and lead, while making the environment safe for risks and mistakes. Leaders also demonstrate the ability to lead by example, ethically, morally and purposefully. Leaders regularly communicate the vision and empower the culture within the organization. They continue to build trust and lead the challenges of a constantly changing workplace and society. Leaders understand that it



is necessary to incorporate balance not only in the lives of others, but their own as well. This encourages leaders to think about life and work differently.

As organizations continue to move away from the command and control structure to open, flexible, risk-taking and creative environments, changing the mental models organizations have of themselves should be led by leadership's commitment from the top down. Today's leaders encourage corporate entrepreneurship by exploring the organizations destiny. Leaders taking a systems approach to looking at and exploring the forces at work and the interrelationships that make things happen in the organization are most often successful.

Leaders come in all styles, personalities and models with varying degrees of behaviors. More important than leadership style is the leaders ability to exercise influence, direct, motivate, and persuade others to attain the strategic intent and goals of the organization. When leaders direct their energy and resources to meeting their goals by providing visible and participatory leadership, they demonstrate an understanding of Colin Powell's belief that *leadership is the art of accomplishing more than the science of management says is possible*.

Leadership versus Management

Managers provide resources...leaders provide vision and influence. A twelve-year-old girl on a playground during recess was intently observed as she led out in a game the class wanted to play. It was clear that she understood and knew the gifts and strengths of each of her classmates as she provided them guidance on what position she felt they would be most successful in. To one she said, "You are so good at catching fly balls, I think it would be great if you played outfield." To another, she smiled and offered her on take how fast they were at scooping up ground balls. For another still, she knew their fear of not playing well and offered them the position of referee.

In every instance, this young girl used her incredible *natural* leadership skills to build an effective and winning team by creating an environment where each participant



felt valued and was able to work in their area of strength. This allowed everyone to play their best and have fun at the same time because they were doing what they did well. Her uncanny perceptiveness provided a Pygmalion effect by using the power of leadership to bring to life her vision of success, which in turn helped her team win the game.

Covey (1994) states “Management works within the paradigm. Leadership creates new paradigms. Management works within the system. Leadership works on the system. You manage ‘things’ but you lead people” (p. 27). In understanding the differences between leadership and management, one would have to differentiate the functions of each of these roles. Both are desperately needed and both have extremely important functions within organizations. It is also true that both managers and leaders fail miserably when they are unwilling or unable to take into account the needs of the people involved in helping them achieve their goals. Management and leadership should work in tandem to accomplish what needs to be done. According to Stephen Covey, “management is problem-oriented and leadership is opportunity oriented” (Covey, 1994, p. 48).

“Management has not meaning apart from its goals. Managers must, therefore, keep organizational goals in mind at all times” (Certo, 1997, p. 5). Managers plan, organize, control and influence processes, procedures and goals. Leadership is an evolution of oneself through a constant growth and development process. “At bottom, becoming a leader is synonymous with becoming yourself. It is precisely that simple, and it’s also that difficult” (Bennis, 1989, p. 9).

When manager’s processes and procedures go awry, when organizations change culturally and systemically, when strategic initiatives change midstream, it is leadership that must provide consistency in the face of difficult times. “The factor that empowers the workforce and ultimately determines which organizations succeed or fail is the leadership of those organizations” (Cohen, 2000, p. 3).



Leaders establish a vision and provide energy and enthusiasm for the vision. Antoine de Saint Exupery has been quoted as saying that if you want to build a ship, don't drum up the men to gather the wood, divide the work, and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea (DailyQuote, 2002). Leaders consistently communicate the vision and provide support for changing mental models, which enables others to act in support of the vision.

While management establishes specific purpose and mission, makes work productive and effectively manages social impacts (Drucker, 2001, p. 14), leaders influences others to willingly achieve the group's vision for success. Leaders help others change the way they see themselves in the picture (vision) of the organization. Leaders listen well and encourage others to take leadership roles within the organization. Leaders understand that creativity is born when people stop long enough to listen and see what they have not previously looked at or heard. "When we start to look through a leadership instead of management paradigm, we begin to see opportunities in places we never really thought of before (Covey, 1994, p. 274).

Pressing Issues For the 21st Century Leader

Leadership and a Diverse Culture – The effect of leadership on the culture should never be underestimated. As the leader goes, so goes the culture. Cultures are greatly influenced by leadership. "Organizational cultures are created in part by leaders, and one of the most decisive functions of leadership is the creation, management and sometimes even the destruction of culture (Schein, 1992, p. 5).

There are over 6 billion people on this planet and as it gets smaller and smaller through the use of technology, it is imperative that successful leaders everywhere address the issues of diversity. Diversity is much bigger than the all too familiar concerns around race and gender equity. It is about leadership's capacity to influence people to WILLINGLY work toward company objectives. Diversity is moving beyond the usual and customary familiar zone in order to build trust. It is valuing differences no matter how big or small they may seem. Diversity is about taking the time and making



the commitment to see the “good” in being different and sharing in the promise that similarities offer.

To accomplish this, it will take moving beyond the fear of not knowing what to expect, to expecting greatness of others. It will take moving away from what is familiar and comfortable and what most have come to trust and that is, moving into relationships with those who are not similar in outward appearance, thinking styles, and personalities. It means breaking down the old models of what success looks like and reframe who is seen as having leadership potential.

The benefits of ensuring that everyone is safe in contributing their very best is rich. According to Covenant Investment Management, stock in companies with strong diversity records performed 2.4 times better than stock in firms that didn't promote diversity (Bush, 2001). Companies that have successfully achieved and maintained diversity have done it by integrating diversity into their ongoing systems, daily practices and investing in long-term changes in organization design to maintain that diversity. Any company wanting to hire and keep the best and brightest, meet the needs of its customers both internally and externally, and ride the wave of success in product development and financial rewards is going to need the brain power, efforts and commitment of everyone to make it happen.

Leadership and Change – Leaders can only truly lead when they lead by example. In the matter of change, leaders have to show their commitment to change in a very flexible, open and meaningful way. “Every interaction between leaders and others that occurs during a change effort serves as an opportunity for leaders to model behaviors consistent with the culture they aspire to create” (Jacobs, 1997, p. 241). One thing is sure, change is inevitable, it is constant and it requires that leaders are resolved in their commitment to keep leading through change a high priority.

Today's leaders must be open to change and be “bendable” in their approach to problem solving. Effective leaders make it safe to learn from each other, from outside



or external influences and most importantly from mistakes made. When it is okay to make mistakes, people are freer to take risks, be creative and look for answers in the most unusual places. 'Out of the box' thinking generates...new and innovative ways of getting the mission accomplished. Everyone has heard of the old saying, if you always do what you've always done, you always get what you've always got. Twenty first century leaders know that "in the box" is not a place they want or need to be. Leaders know, understand, and trust in their people's innate ability to do what need to be done. Old actions get the same old results. Leaders make their organizations true learning organizations in every sense of the word.

Leadership and Learning – Getting the entire organization involved in moving the culture to a learning environment takes genuine commitment of energy, time and resources ...not lip service. Leaders have to get out of the office and see what is going on in the organization. Leaders lead and manage by walking around. Leaders often miss learning opportunities because they engage in independent decision-making. This often leads to less than desirable results. "The key role of leaders is to keep the wheel moving and it requires energy, mental finesse and the ability to hold fast to a sense of purpose and the willingness to understand mental models of people with learning styles other than your own" (Senge, 1994, p. 63).

Leading is about constantly learning and that means helping everyone understand their role as leaders. It is never just one individual's responsibility to be the leader. Everyone on the team is a leader and based on the need of the organization at the time, will be called upon to use their abilities, gifts and talents in a leadership role. "Everyone must be a leader before there's effective leadership in the new organization" (Belasco, 1993, p. 23).

Leaders don't always know everything nor should they be expected to know everything. More important is the need to be resourceful. Leaders should know where and how to find the answers to issues that are pressing. Leaders share the vision, generate ideas and resolve problems through people. "Leaders do not have to be great



men or women by being intellectual geniuses or omniscient prophets to succeed, but they do need to have the “right stuff...” (Unknown)

Summary

Instinctively, genuine leaders understand that you get what you expect. It has been said that people rise to the challenge when it is their challenge. Leaders can never underestimate the power of the people to accomplish all that is in them. Leaders not only inspire and communicate the vision, they make it okay for people to challenge the process by enabling them to be all that they can be. They help others change their mental models by making it safe to make mistakes and think creatively. Leaders look for, expect and demand excellence from each individual because they know that everyone has leadership potential. Leaders don't empower...they create a culture that grows the seeds of empowerment so that every employee or individual feels safe in making contributions to the organization, thereby empowering themselves.

Leaders work on solutions and build relationships. They develop partnerships with those inside and outside their organization to become resourceful and careful guardians of the gifts and talents of those who are in their charge. Leaders create enthusiasm and excitement around the vision and encourage managers to get out of the way and be supportive. Leaders blaze the trail for others to see their way more clearly thus eliminating the fear of failing. In short, leaders influence others to get needs met in support of the goal. “You cannot be a great leader unless your confidence in others is as strong as your confidence in yourself” (Biro, 1997, p. 231).

A quote from the Los Angeles Times Business Journal (2000) sums it up nicely, “To become a successful leader, you must be able to effectively self evaluate ... to be able to step out of yourself, on occasion and view your own behavior with objectivity. This enables you to make powerful and personal choices about how you relate to the people to whom you provide leadership. Leadership ... a partnership in success!



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