

More than just a title: 6 aspects of great leadership

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For many, the title of manager or leader means that you earn a significant salary and have absolute control while delegating the work to others. But, this is not a sustainable form of leadership, particularly not in the modern workplace.

Leaders must be facilitators, people who can empower others, yet manage to maintain focus, discipline and respect. Successful leaders work harder and for longer hours than others in the company. They carry the ultimate responsibility for the success of the business. Real leadership is therefore not about the title, it is an incredibly important position of responsibility.

Much of a leader's responsibility comes down to how employees are managed. This is possibly the most crucial test for the quality of leadership in a company.

Leader responsibilities in terms of managing people:

1. Acknowledge the impact your behaviour has on others in the workplace

The behaviour of a leader serves as an example to others. If the leader procrastinates, is lazy, abusive, absent, arrogant, or corrupt, it will provide a model of behaviour that others will follow. The best leaders tend to show humility, productivity, fairness, respect and ethical behaviour, and they understand that they need to create a work environment where people can flourish. To be a good leader, therefore, requires so much more than technical skills.

2. Create an environment of care, fairness and respect

Leaders who care about their people and who are as even-handed and fair as is humanly possible, more easily earn the respect of employees. Douglas McGregor's Theory Y leaders believe that their employees are talented and have much to offer the workplace. These leaders create a much more positive work environment. Such a positive environment has a direct impact on productivity, creativity, and even interpersonal relationships.

3. Create an environment where people can learn

This can be formalised learning such as internships, or being sponsored for training courses or qualifications. Valuable learning could however also result from practical and onsite learning, or articles made available on a company intranet, to mention just a few. In many workplaces there are ample opportunities to learn, particularly when employees use some of their own initiative to learn about the job, the company, the industry or projects.

Good leaders are often good at storytelling and teaching. They play the role of coach, sometimes connecting their employees with others who can best teach desired skills.

4. Create an environment where people can innovate

Innovation does not only refer to technological or disruptive innovation. Smaller innovations can also have immense value to the organisation. By creating an environment where employees can suggest changes and innovations to



existing ways of doing work, can be of immense value. For employees to do so, they must feel confident that they will be “heard”. Their ideas need not always be accepted, but it at least needs to be acknowledged, respected, and considered. You know you’re doing a good job as leader when your employees feel safe enough to share new, untested ideas, even if there might be a risk of failure or rejection.

5. Create an environment of integrity and trust

Trust cannot be demanded - it must be earned! Trust takes a long time to be established and it can be broken in a single irresponsible, angry or impulsive moment. Leaders cannot be successful if employees do not trust him/her. It takes consistent trustworthy decisions and actions from a leader to be trusted by employees. For people to trust the leader he/she must be honest, “keep their promises” and “do the right thing”. Once the leader is branded as unreliable, it becomes nearly impossible for a leader to earn trust from employees again.

6. Create an environment where consequences and discipline can be accepted

The workplace is not always a positive and happy environment. Contracts may be lost; the economy may make doing business very difficult, or there may be corruption or sabotage.

It is the responsibility of the leader to implement corrective actions when something in the business goes wrong. Good leaders are able to fairly deal with consequences, hold others accountable, and through it all remain positive about the future.

A leader is a person that must “keep everything together” whether it is the people, the product, the client needs, the need for governance, and of course the finances. The character of the leader and the quality of the decision he/she makes creates the atmosphere within which people work. Leaders, therefore, have complex responsibilities, and how they conduct themselves has a big influence on the nature of the workplace.

It is a big job! Are you still sure that you want that promotion?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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