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Leadership Skills for Challenging Times

By Ed Sykes

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We consistently face new and ever growing challenges in the workplace such as reorganizing, downsizing, and "left out sizing." We are faced with the question, "How do we lead in this storm of change?" It may seem difficult at times and the decisions we make define our short-term and long-term outcomes. I will share with you five leadership techniques guaranteed to keep you on track during these difficult times.

*** Integrity.**

I put this first because the lack of integrity will make or break you as a professional, as a leader, as a person in the long run. The lack of this will turn yesterday's heroes in today's villains. For example, "MCI was the apple of the business community's eye. High revenues, high profits, and high growth; MCI was beating the competition hands down. Then it was discovered that there were gross accounting irregularities that accounted for the astounding profits. You see, management made a decision, "Do I continue to sustain good growth and be able to look at myself in the mirror or do I cook the accounting books and spend the rest of my time covering up this integrity deficiency? The real shame of the MCI situation was that AT&T, Sprint, and others in the industry had to cut costs and lay off thousands of employees to compete with MCI's false numbers. The lack of integrity at MCI not only affected the company but also the livelihood of thousands and the industry as a whole. I was recently speaking with a recently retired City Council member who is well respected in the community. I asked her what the secret was to her success while on the council? She mentioned that one of her political adversaries said to her, "While you were on the council, I didn't like the way you voted, but I respected the way you voted because you were consistent with your votes and had the city's best interest in mind." Ask yourself what decisions that you make are right for the long term? Be consistent in your actions, whether it is with management, your team, or your family.

*** Knowledge.**

With change happening faster and faster every moment, it is extremely important that you gain the

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knowledge to master these changes. You owe it not only to yourself, but to your team and management. As I always say, "It's not having the right answer, it's that you have the right answer faster than before." Many times during my teambuilding programs a student will say, "I didn't know where to find the answer." Then I will say, "That is an unacceptable answer." Because part of being a leader is acquiring the skills to find the right answers. With the Internet, classroom and online training, mentors, etc., the knowledge is at your fingertips. Challenge your team members to use the same resources to acquire the knowledge to master their challenges. By acquiring this knowledge, you will be able to navigate your team through the ocean of change and achieve your goals.

* Decisiveness.

You have seen them. They wait for information, then more information before making a decision. Then they need more information to support the information they already have. Then they need a committee

to analyze the information. Then they wait for the perfect time to make the decision. Well, you know what I mean. Anyone you know? Make the decision! Good things happen when you take action; you grow, you adapt, and your team grows. There is no perfect time to make a decision. Leaders make decisions based on past experience, putting into action the decision, and staying and adapting the decision if needed. But make the decision. The worst quality you can show your team is indecision. What do you think your team sees when you can't make a decision? Make the decision and go for it.

* Vision.

This is the ability not only to see what is the present – anyone can do that – it's the ability to see the future. Outstanding leaders can not only see their team for what they can do now, but what they can become, and paint the picture for them. These leaders are consistently communicating and coaching their team members to that vision. One of the best ways, and least used methods, to convey your vision is the team meeting (Teambuilding and Coaching Skills for Outstanding Results). Every meeting should start out with the team vision, mission, and goals; and the rest of the meeting should tie into the vision. For example, the motivation portion of the meeting should tie into the vision, the information portion of the meeting should tie into the vision, the training portion of the meeting should tie into the vision, etc. Also, invest time to develop your team members' personal visions and show them how they can accomplish their personal goals by tying into the overall vision. By consistently communicating the vision, your team will move with purpose, feel they are personally making a difference, and achieve their goals sooner.

* Unselfishness

Stephen Covey, in his successful book *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, wrote that a true leader must be a servant to the ones he or she leads. The leader must be able to "give of oneself for the good of the team." In other words, be unselfish in words and action. Be unselfish in praise of others, in public, especially in front of management. Be unselfish in the ability to take time to listen, really listen to your team's concerns. A recent management survey said that the average time management invests doing "pure listening" to employees during the year is a mere two hours—just two hours! What was meant by "pure listening" time was listening with eye contact, acknowledgement, and not answering the phone while listening, not speaking with another person while listening, etc. Be unselfish in the ability to help your team. Whether it's the ability to readily assist with a difficult telephone call, jump in and remove road blocks for team members, or "be there" for a team member

during challenging moments. Believe me, your team will remember those moments and excel for you.

Now I challenge you to put into action just one of the leadership techniques I mentioned above to achieve your vision, your mission, and your goals in the future.

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Sales Management and Leadership - They aren't the same!©

By Bill Truax

Today Sales Managers usually have two roles. First, they have to manage and administer the sales team. Second, they are also expected to demonstrate Leadership of the sales team. These are two different roles.

Most Sales Managers are trained in the management and administration skills, but few are taught Leadership. They are simply expected to Lead - a very poor and risky strategy.

I want to discuss General Leadership development first.

Leadership - Setting Visions/Goals and then empowering and motivating others to accomplish those Visions/Goals.

Some people demonstrate Leadership skills naturally. We saw them as we were growing up. They were the student council leaders, athletic team captains, club presidents, etc.

Most managers will need training in Leadership and that takes a commitment from the corporation because it will take time and dedication. But the rewards can be phenomenal. The company will have to:

- Commit to the development of people.
- Commit to developmental programs – the key word for training is developmental.
- Commitment to the long haul, unfortunately, nothing good ever seems to happen quickly. So the corporation must keep driving people development regardless of other initiatives, programs, and events.

From our experience, it takes a minimum of 6- 12 months and you shouldn't rush it. This is not an

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event.

There are 3 stages of development.

- Bring the "Leadership vision" into the culture - make it part of the organization and start to get "buy in" from all the future participants. Create anticipation.
- Conduct the development programs company wide - bring in all the departments. This will create Leaders throughout the organization as well as enhance the overall working environment.
- Re-enforce training, support it, and use it. Make the training part of regular personnel assessments, reviews, etc. You get what you inspect.

Leadership is not just the CEO or president; it must be in all levels of a corporation.

Imagine how your company's bottom line would be affected if all your managers could fulfill a Leadership role when needed and therefore improved performance by just 3% – 8% or more?

Now, Sales Team Leadership can do that and much more.

The Sales Team Leader needs to do two things - develop the teams' skills and then lead them to success.

- First, the Leader must know the skills and knowledge base that each team member needs to do their job.
- Second, the Leader must rate each team member's competency in each skill and knowledge base.
- Third, train and enhance skills and knowledge where needed.

Why is this necessary?

We can't simply allow people to develop on their own. If you want your people to perform the skills and use the knowledge base competently you must teach them the skills and knowledge base you want them to use. If you leave it up to them, they will learn something. Hoping it is what you want is really risky.

No one has a "skill vacuum." If they aren't taught, they will create it themselves. Just like children, if you don't teach them your values, they will create their own. If the need is there, it will be met, somehow.

Now the Leadership role grows. Once the goals for the sales team are set every Leader does the following in some form.

1. Create a Vision for each of the tasks
2. Create the Team to develop and achieve the GPS – that is, the Goal, Plan, and Steps to accomplish the Vision

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3. Empower the Team
4. Produce Short Term successes to keep the GPS alive
5. Stick with it for the Long Haul

5 may be the most important step. How many of you have been in companies who get all excited about a new program, push it hard for a few weeks, and then get all excited about another program? The first program never has success because it was not given time to develop.

In conclusion, Leadership offers many benefits and most organizations will need to specifically develop this skill for its managers. It takes Leadership to bring it in, however.

The rewards will be well worth the effort.

Sell Well and Often,

Bill Truax

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