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Modern Managers Need Leadership Skills

By Mihaela Lica

Managers and Leaders - Are They Synonyms?

A manager is the person in charge of commanding and running a business or a project. Leadership deals with the interpersonal relations. Managing means planning, developing and organizing. In the contemporary society leadership qualities along with managing abilities are a must.

If there is one thing I've learnt during my career as a military TV redactor in the Romanian Ministry of Defence, that is that leadership has never been simple. In this day and age even military leaders are confronted with many challenges including bureaucracy, media influence, internationalisation and changes of cultural and economic patterns.

One thing is so far clear: a leader is not a ruler or a despot. His role is to guide, to inspire, to communicate, to build trust and to direct toward the achievement of goals.

Many managers consider themselves leaders. Well, that's not entirely accurate. When a manager is able to persuade a team to complete some objectives without forcing his authority, then he is demonstrating leadership qualities. While a leader can be a manager, a manager is not necessary a leader.

Make no confusions: to be in charge of a team doesn't automatically make you a leader. People choose their leaders naturally, based on personal feelings, most of the times subjective evaluations. There are some traditional patterns people look for in a leader: physical appearance, social and personal traits. Studies prove that tall and handsome men make charismatic leaders. Education plays a significant role, but not as important as individual qualities such as charisma, magnetism, reputation and tact. Such leaders have to be self confident and able to listen to their followers. While physical appearance cannot be changed, but slightly improved with the right clothing, other behaviours can be trained.

Leadership Training - Is That Really Necessary?

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My answer is yes. Leaders are made, not born. There is no such a thing as a natural born leader - this is just a label used to describe a person able to influence others easily. Because everyone has a natural born capacity to lead, becoming a leader is not so difficult. To achieve this goal training and learning go hand in hand.

What should a leader learn? The art of communicating a message across effectively and clearly is a vital part of being a successful leader. Speaking is not enough. Important factors, such as understanding and using body language, listening and writing, fuse to generate the lifeblood of good communication.

A leader should learn to overcome other's people barriers when delivering a message. There are three basic rules to achieve this goal: be clear in your mind, deliver the message in plain language and make sure that the idea has been understood.

Cultural differences can make it difficult for some people to communicate effectively. Germans and Nordics are more restrained in gesture than many Latin nations, while Americans and Australians can say exactly what they mean. A "be yourself" approach can work - there is no better marketing than telling the truth. Be honest, but not impolite. Do not try to be anyone else or copy another one's style.

You've heard that often: first impressions are very important. In business and media that's a proven theory: the first five seconds of a meeting are more important than the next ten minutes. A faultless look, even if informal, makes always a good impact: matching decent colours, impeccable shoes and garments, a proper haircut and no exaggeration with cologne will not err.

Certainly there's more to leadership training than one can write in a short article: from learning the secret of clear communication both within the team and with the media, to understanding and using gestures; from learning how to listen to recognizing and overcoming prejudice (ground rule: think about the words you hear, not the person saying them); from reading efficiently to taking notes and improving memory; from using the phone to writing letters and much more.

Because the contemporary society is continuously changing, modern managers and leaders need to improve their skills constantly and to gather knowledge vital for their organizations.

Leadership Theories In 1960 the Douglas McGregor described two behavioural theories, "Theory X" and "Theory Y", in his book "The Human Side of Enterprise".

Theory X represents the idea of ruling by controlling, the so-called "stick and carrot" philosophy of management. According to Freud people are naturally lazy and need to be controlled or punished in order to work effectively. Some managers do believe these affirmations. In the modern society such approaches lead nowhere: employees get frustrated, feel uncomfortable at work, tend to introvert, perform just because they are afraid of some consequences and not because they are motivated. As long as this theory - you can find a better description of it on the web by typing Douglas McGregor in any search engine - will influence managers, the real potentials of an employee will remain hidden.

McGregor's Theory Y gives prominence to communication and human interrelations. Managers who

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create a harmonious working environment motivate workers. The idea is that a satisfied team will achieve goals faster and more proficient than a frustrated, fearful team. Adepts of the Theory Y give confidence to their followers, know how to listen and how to reward them and support initiative and creativity. The individual and organizational goals can be integrated. This is the kind of approach the modern society longs for. People need to be respected and valued for what and who they are. Although there are common traits for us all, it's a wrong approach to generalize.

Why Motivate?

Treat your workers as individuals and soon you will be able to harvest the fruits of their work. And don't forget: a "thank you, well done" motivates and wins a heart and a won heart means a step towards attaining loyalty.

To motivate means to understand human nature. Motivation is an essential factor in the existence and success of a company and it is a skill which must be learnt. Forget the idea that money is the prime motivator. Nowadays security is a major stimulus: unemployment determines workers to appreciate the security of a job. Well, sure employees will act positively to a raise or a money prize, but if they don't like the job, the company or (yes!) the manager is unlikely that they will perform at their best.

Conclusion

As people have a normal predisposition to follow certain attitudes, modern managers and leaders should be careful and conduct by example. In order to avoid the perception of inconsistency within the management team, training their leadership skills is a necessity.

Mihaela Lica is a skilled journalist and PR consultant, founder of Pamil Visions -

<http://www.pamil-visions.com/>

Previously she used to work as a military TV redactor for Pro Patria and the Military Media Trust within the Public Relations Directorate of the Romanian Ministry of Defence.

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.

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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 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.

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- 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
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

Bill@BlitzCall.com

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Bill Truax is a Sales Management and Field Operations Consultant living in Cleveland, Oh. He conducts Sales Team Assessments, conducts Management and Leadership development programs,

and works with Field Sales Professionals both in the field and in workshops. He has written 3 books and recorded 2 CD's on Prospecting and Making Cold Calls and conducts a variety of skill based seminars, workshops, and train the trainer programs. Visit his website at

www.BlitzCall.com



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