



FIVE TOP TIPS FOR LEADERSHIP

Essential steps to outstanding leadership

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Can you name a top-performing leader who you think of as inspirational, whose organisation consistently raises its performance levels and who has a workforce which is committed and motivated? Who ever it is, their leadership is likely to be transformational. We're not talking about someone who's interested simply in task fulfilment within the established order, but rather someone who's passionate about constant change for the better and who recognises, in a profound way, that their people are the key to that.

This leader is likely to:

- **Be authentic:** The way they behave and think is completely aligned with – indeed led by - their deepest personal beliefs and values. They are willing to stand up for these beliefs and values openly and courageously. Not only does their authenticity play out at a purely personal level, but it also shows in the alignment of their behaviour and style with the values and needs of the organisation. In other words they carry an authority which is nourished by, on the one hand, high self-awareness and an assured 'centredness' around who they are, and, on the other, their service to the needs, strategies and objectives of their organisation through influencing and motivating others to achieve those goals. Juggling these two imperatives – being true to both themselves and their organisation – is what the best leaders do well.
- **Have high emotional intelligence.** Emotional intelligence is core to transformational leadership – the kind of leadership that transforms people and organisations both rationally and at their heart, enabling them to grow, and bringing about changes that are permanent, self-perpetuating and momentum-building. This kind of leadership is focused on the long term, releasing the potential of teams and taking those teams through change which will be positive and sustained. There are two important aspects to the emotionally intelligent leader's behaviour: firstly, they are aware of their own emotions and they manage them effectively. They have a strong sense of their own worth, deep self-belief and independence: they take responsibility for the direction of their own lives and they consistently work towards the vision that they have created. Secondly, they are aware of other people's emotions (they have 'social awareness') and handle them well. Superstar CEOs are skilled at

managing interpersonal relationships and have high levels of empathy. They know that leadership is about helping people get better at what they do well.

- **Paint a vision**, inspire people with the trust and belief that they can achieve that vision and lead them towards it – consistently. Top-ranking leaders conceive visions which are compelling and inspiring, clear and meaningful, and which, to begin with, often only they can see. Because they are envisioning something which does not already exist, they blend imagination with realism to create a vision which is both stretching and possible (remember Henry Ford’s vision of a car that every American family could afford). The leader creates a path from the present to that future vision, and inspires his or her people with conviction not only that the vision is possible but also that they have the ability to reach it. Vision is seeing what life could be like while dealing with life as it is. In John Adair’s words, it is the blazing campfire around which people will gather. It provides light, energy, warmth and unity.
- **Be passionate.** Their enthusiasm is dynamic, energetic and constant. It is unwavering and is experienced by those around them as inspirational, not easily phased by setbacks. According to a Bedouin proverb ‘what comes from your heart is greater than what comes from your hand only’: people respond to what is in the leader’s heart because such leaders’ excitement and motivation are infectious. A passionate leader will find that they can inspire those around them to push themselves beyond what they thought they were ever capable of – to find resources in themselves they never dreamed were there. In that way these followers will in turn become inspiring to others and the leader’s message and impact will grow exponentially.
- **Be self-effacing.** Rather than channelling their ego and self-interest towards themselves, and seeking the satisfaction of their own needs (whether material, emotional or psychological) they focus with determination on constantly raising the performance levels of their organisation. They are more concerned with the success of the organisation than with their own, and want to see it even more successful when they are no longer there than when they are there. Almost paradoxically, they blend personal humility with professional drive. As Jim Collins puts it, they are both modest and wilful, both humble and fearless. They compose teams which are the best they can possibly be. This includes building teams of individuals who are unlike them and unlike each other, so that the synergy, robustness and challenge of complementarity can really get to work. The founder of Taoism, Lau Tzu, said around 500 BC: ‘The leader is best when people are hardly aware of his existenceFail to honour people, and they will fail to honour you. But of a good leader, who speaks little, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, the people say, 'We did it ourselves.'

Resources:

- ‘Leadership Coaching’ - Graham Lee, 2006 CIPD. ISBN: 0 85292 996 x
- ‘Emotional Capitalists – The New Leaders’ by Martyn Newman

- ‘Improving Organizational Effectiveness Through Transformational Leadership’ - Bernard M Bass and Bruce J Avolio, 1994
- ‘Model of Transactional and Transformational Leaders’ - James MacGregor Burns, 1978
- ‘The Inspirational Leader’ – John Adair, 2003, Kogan Page. ISBN 0 7494 4046 5
- ‘Good to Great’ – Jim Collins, 2001, Random House. ISBN 0 7126 7609 0

Lindsay Wittenberg coaches executives and managers who want to understand who they really are and make a step change in performance, development or career. See www.lindsaywittenberg.co.uk

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