

Facilitator — October/November 2014
Sharpen Your Tools
Gordon Bruner

Qualities of a GREAT LEADER

I was very humbled when RFMA's Emerging Professionals group asked me to develop and present a leadership webinar. The webinar, "Leading to Success," was a great opportunity for me to talk about certain qualities that help make a successful leader.

We all know that not everyone can be a leader. I am sure you can think of some people who have tried and failed. There truly is an art to becoming a leader— one who people actually want to follow. Some important characteristics of a leader include having integrity and successful problem-solving skills and maintaining open lines of communication. These are the traits that inspire and motivate people. Leaders don't push but pull their team toward success.

The True Mark of Leader

It is a ridiculous notion to believe that simply having power automatically makes you a great leader. It's not your title or position that makes you a leader. A lofty title may give you some authority to boss people around, but in the end, if you're not leading, you're simply just a dictator giving out orders. Some people tend to forget that relationships are a two way street. To earn respect, you must give respect. One-sided relationships do not last very long.

Being a leader who people look up to requires emotional intelligence. We are all different; we all have different wants and needs. What motivates me may not motivate you, and those who try to manage everyone the same way may not have a successful outcome. While it is important to know yourself, knowing your team is just as crucial. Taking the time to find out their personal interests or goals and evaluating their unique personality to figure out what makes them tick or what gets them inspired, can help develop rapport between you and your team and build relationships that are based on trust.

Integrity is also important. In dealing with people, whether it is your family, coworkers, employees or customers, no matter how long or how hard you have worked on the foundation of your relationship, I can guarantee it will come crashing down without integrity. When you always point the blame to someone else or fail to do the right thing, you are risking your credibility. You are essentially handing people the scissors to tear apart your own reputation. Once that happens, your relationship will have nothing to stand on. People do business with people they know and trust, and as a leader, eyes are always on you.

Be a Role Model

"If you tell the truth, you never have to remember a thing." — Mark Twain

You are the example; the role model. Having integrity by holding yourself accountable as well as looking out for other people's interests and not just your own, shows a strong, reputable character. That will give them the confidence to trust your actions and your abilities as a leader.

A great leader has the ability to solve problems. When you hire someone on your team, for him or her to be the most effective, you must place him or her in the right position. It is your responsibility to prepare for any roadblocks and equip them with the necessary tools to thrive. Exceptional leaders must have the skill to develop their people. This allows relinquishing some control and delegating tasks to others, which shows trust and confidence in the team. Don't be afraid to give some autonomy to make mistakes, but be there to help them get back on the right track. After all, it is how you recover from the failure that shows your true strength of character.

Become Part of the Solution

“The problem is not that there are problems. The problem is expecting otherwise and thinking that having problems is a problem.” — Theodore Isaac Rubin

We are human. We will make mistakes more times than we would like, but instead of becoming part of the problem, be part of the solution. Your team shouldn't be afraid to come to you. Remember, everyone is on the same side trying to reach the same goal.

Engaging with the people you work with builds rapport. If you express to them that their thoughts and opinions matter, they will feel comfortable in speaking with you, and you are opening the lines of communication. Having an open door and being accessible can help you construct a strong team. Accepting that you don't know everything or have all the answers shows humility. So, make time to actively listen and ask for feedback. This will give them a sense of value and respect, which is necessary to produce a healthy work environment.

“When I was first starting out, I pretty much ignored returning emails and phone calls under the impression that I was simply ‘too busy’ for it. Then one day I realized that people had stopped coming to me when opportunity knocked, and it hit me: I had to make myself more accessible if I wanted to get ahead.” — Bill Gates

Seek to Inspire

Being a leader who has integrity, fosters the ability to solve problems and makes themselves accessible with open lines of communication, all ties together. With these characteristics, you will inspire others. People will follow you because they feel like a valuable asset to you and the company. They know they have a vital role that will contribute to the success of the overall goal. They will look to you for inspiration, and feel comfortable to make mistakes and trust that you will be there to help them when they stumble.

I know the success of my company depends on having great people on my team. If you develop genuine, meaningful relationships with your people who believe in what they do, your business will thrive.

Gordon Bruner is the owner of VMC Facilities LLC. Visit HurryItUp.com for information on the full 50 fundamentals of success.