

How To Be A Leader At Work

Most organizations have at least one person who is a natural leader. When it is announced she will be leading a new team, employees line up to join. When he asks for a volunteer for an assignment, people jump at the chance. Employees turn to her as a mentor, or look to him as a role model.

Meanwhile, others in the organization are struggling to do their job with too few human resources. So how do natural leaders do it? What is their **secret** to getting people to go the extra mile for them?

Although many effective leaders are naturally charismatic, there are a number of leadership behaviours that can be adopted by anyone who wants to have greater support from other people. While some leadership techniques may sound manipulative, a wise leader knows the best results come from having people provide their support willingly.

As U.S. President and General Dwight D. Eisenhower defined it:

Leadership is the art of getting someone to do something you want done because he wants to do it.

Dwight D. Eisenhower

People naturally want to follow a good leader. After meeting with an effective leader it is not unusual to feel uplifted, inspired and motivated to work towards a common goal.

Effective leaders make others feel good about themselves as well as the work they are doing. The leader has a vision of what she wants to achieve and can communicate that vision to others in a way that makes people want to be part of it.

One thing a good leader typically does is to communicate the big picture, so that each employee can see how the particular role he plays makes a contribution to the final result.

In a recent study of employees at all levels in companies of all sizes, Beverly Kaye and Sharon Jordan-Evans, authors of *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em*, found that "meaningful work, making a difference and a contribution" was one of the top three reasons given by 90% of employees when asked why they remain at a company. (The other reasons cited among the top three were "career growth, learning and development" and "exciting work and challenge.")

When someone understands why a job that might otherwise be considered menial is important, that person is likely to be both more committed and more productive.

People are also likely to follow leaders they see as positive role models. If a leader demonstrates a strong belief in something, it inspires others to work towards the leader's vision, even when a situation might appear to be almost hopeless. An excellent example of a leader who faced this type of situation is Lee Iacocca. When Chrysler's fortunes reached a low in the 1980s, he cut his salary to \$1 per year to prove his conviction that things would get better. They did. Under his leadership, the company flourished.

Good leaders not only "walk the walk", they "talk the talk". When they speak about the future, they are positive and upbeat. Mark Victor Hansen, a successful motivational speaker and co-author of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* books, said that even in the early days of his career, if someone asked how he was doing he always responded that he was doing **fabulously**. His enthusiasm won him plenty of supporters who helped make his vision a reality.

Yet some people feel the way to get support from others is by telling them how grim a situation is, hoping that will make them want to help turn things around. On the contrary, Eeyores (those who sound like the gloomy Winnie the Pooh character) may inspire people to start looking for another job, rather than work to improve the situation they are in.

If you have a tendency to be negative, but want to inspire others to support you in achieving a goal, resolve to focus on solutions rather than problems. If Plan A isn't working, avoid bemoaning the situation and instead come up with a Plan B. If necessary, have Plan C waiting in the wings. Maintain a can-do attitude and you are likely to attract people who will support you in achieving your goals.

As well as communicating their vision, good leaders know they need to communicate "what's in it for you" in order to have employees go the extra mile.

They also understand that different people are motivated by different things. For employees motivated by a need for achievement, a leader explains how the task offers an opportunity to take on a challenging but achievable goal. Those with a desire for power are told how their participation can bring them prestige and lead to greater opportunities. While employees who are motivated by affiliation need to hear how they will be part of a team of people working together.

Effective leaders also use techniques to communicate their belief that each team member is important, including remembering and using people's preferred names (e.g. not "Rick" if someone prefers to be called "Richard"). As Dale Carnegie observed, "the average person is more interested in his or her own name than in all the other names on earth put together." Keys to remembering names include paying attention when introduced to someone, mentally repeating the name and using it in conversation.

Good leaders will introduce employees by name first, rather than job title. They refer to employees as team members, associates, or colleagues – never as "subordinates" – and make no distinction between "essential" and "non-essential" staff or "professional" and "non-professional" staff. Words have power, including the power to make people feel whether or not they are important to the success of an organization.

Good leaders believe that every team member matters and foster an environment that makes everyone feel important. It is no wonder they attract all the support they need to help them achieve their goals.

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