

A Leader Should Always Lead From the Front

A drop of water in the lake has no identity. But if it is on a lotus leaf, it shines like a pearl. We should always find and be at a place where we can shine. While simple principles of 'Management' teach us as to how to do things in a right way, leadership is all about doing the right things. While 'Management' tells us as to how to climb the ladder of success, the art of leadership helps us in deciding as to which wall is to be climbed, which ladder is to be used and how it is to be used.

A true leader is the one who is willing to develop his/her people to the point that they eventually surpass him or her in knowledge and ability. A leader should always keep one's mind open. As they also say, our mind is like a parachute. It works only when it is open. So, one should exercise one's discretion as to what to learn and where to learn from. God does not require us to be the best, he just wants us to do our best and he will take care of the rest. Remember success never always means doing the best. But it does mean doing better than we did it the last time. It is the small, incremental steps that lead us up the ladder of success than one big jump, which may often result in a broken leg.

At work, we should try to command respect by proving our worth and by our success. If we are ourselves good at work and ourselves have good qualities, then only can we and should we expect the same from others. Otherwise, we would not get our team's respect, as we don't deserve the same. And yes, the best way to get respect is to ourselves give it first. If we don't respect others, others shall also not respect us, howsoever superior, worthy, intelligent or talented we may be. A leader always leads by example. As they say, an example is always better than a precept.

However, while seeking to command over others, we often forget to have command over our self and one who does not have a command over his/her own SELF, would not be able to command anything. Ergo, we should be in complete command of our self. As a good leader while we should always be humble, yet we need to be firm and dignified. A good leader should learn not to be swayed and carried away by praise. Often this praise goes to our head and

makes a home there in the form of our arrogance and then, makes it dysfunctional. In fact, the more we exalt our self, the more we despise others and then we are left alone, without any company because at the height of our arrogance, we are always alone. So, a good leader should avoid these pitfalls of his position.

In fact, a good leader must always try to give a personal touch to his/her relationship with the subordinates, including those from the lowest ranks. He/she should not mind sharing a joke with them once in a while, and if there is a need, he should also pay them a surprise visit, get a gift packet or a bouquet sent on the eve of such occasions as their marriage anniversary or birthday once in a blue moon. He should inquire about their small problems, should try remembering the names of their children, the details of their educational pursuits and such other minor details about their problems and then discuss the same with them with an animated interest. He should also find time off and on to spend some good, relaxed time with them either through a party or a 'get-together'. One can notice as to how our personal equation with a particular person or people in our team takes an upward, skyward swing as a result thereof.

It is widely believed that it is better to bind our relations, without exception, to us by respect, love and gentleness than by regimentation and fear in keeping with McGregor's Y theory. The same applies to any and every relation including the ones we make in our office. We should allow someone enough of independence and right to decide, rather than trying to bind him/her or holding onto him/her through threats and sheer discipline.

We would achieve more if we stop bothering and don't mind as to who gets the credit. As a leader, you should not mind giving credit for a job well done to your subordinates or colleagues. It is generally believed that even if we give credit to others, the truth is that the credit, in the ultimate analysis, remains rightfully ours, as the job was done in our leadership and anyhow, those who give are always bigger than those who take, even if it happens to giving credit.

If possible, we should also not mind signing off a letter of appreciation in favour of an employee or an officer. This small gesture does not only permanently immortalise us and our name in their personal file, but also does a great deal of good to our relationship with the employee, thereby to our control on such an employee and adds positively to the overall office ambience and work productivity. So, we should be generous in our acknowledgement of our team's efforts and we would soon be having them eating out of our palm. In such situations, we must always avoid the 'I', 'me' and 'mine' words. Instead, we should use 'we', 'us' and 'our' while referring to a success and an achievement.

Again, as they say, while success has many fathers, failure is an orphan. *Hitler* said, 'when you are in the light, everyone follows you. But when you enter the darkness, even your own shadow deserts you'. As a leader, we should always be more than willing to chivalrously take the blame for whatever failure comes our way. Be it noted that if we are willing to do that, we would soon discover that all our colleagues and subordinates are there right behind us, to correct the mistake and to get on to the next venture with a renewed vigour and determination.

And as we learn, we should keep sharing our knowledge with others who are important in our life and definitely with our team members. We should also find out about their learning

requirements through our assessments and through lateral interactions with them to organise special training sessions or workshops for them. Such capacity building exercises builds up the overall capacity and efficiency of our organisation. Such lateral communication and interaction bridges the trust and information deficit, which makes us a more effective leader in the ultimate analysis.

So, for a leader it is not only important to keep learning, but it is also important to ensure that the same is not done mechanically. Whatever we do, we must do heart and soul, with all our dedication and devotion. A half-hearted effort never bears results. So, we need to be very careful and attentive in whatever we do or learn. But more than anything, an effective leader should always be focused on the organisational goals and should ensure realisation of the same through effective planning and commensurate execution.

Salient Points

- A true leader is one who is willing to develop his/her people to the point that they eventually surpass him or her in knowledge and ability.
- God does not require us to be the best, he just wants us to do our best and he will take care of the rest.
- The best way to get respect is to ourselves give it first.
- As a leader, we should not mind giving credit for a job well done to our subordinates or colleagues.
- While success has many fathers, failure is an orphan.
- We should keep sharing our knowledge with others who are important in our life and definitely with our team members.

Glossary

Surpass: to exceed

Discretion: freedom to decide in a situation

Precept: a general rule intended to regulate behaviour or thought

Despise: to feel contempt for somebody

Regimentation: organisation according a strict system or pattern

Chivalrous: courteous and gallant manly behaviour

Immortalise: to confer enduring fame

Vigour: strength

Commensurate: corresponding in size or degree