

Personal Leadership: One Key to Growing Any Organization

Written By Tom Northup June 2005

What did Winston Churchill, Lee Iacocca and Bill Gates have in common? Certainly they were great personal leaders who knew what they wanted and how to get it.

However, they didn't succeed because they had great personal leadership qualities. They succeeded because they understood the importance of hiring managers who also possessed personal leadership skills.

These leaders built an environment in which leadership qualities flourished in all employees. As each employee reached new heights of achievement so did the organization, ensuring that the individuals and the organization outperformed the competition.

Leadership is an elusive trait. The typical CEO and senior management team have little formal training in effective leadership and base their style on trial and error. This style will not work. CEOs cannot lead others if they cannot effectively lead themselves. They must develop personal leadership in themselves and their management team.

Changing Attitudes toward Leadership

Anyone, whether CEO or supervisor, can develop personal leadership and make it a dynamic force in his or her life.

Changing attitudes is difficult. Each of us has two things in common, the present and the future. During our present, we program our future. The program we set today determines the results we get tomorrow. If we desire to create a future that is different from our present, we must change our actions and the way we think today.

We exhibit personal leadership when we take responsibility for leading ourselves to reach our personal vision by changing our lives so that we will reach new heights of achievement and lead a life that is positive and fulfilling.

The Most Important Leadership Attitudes

The key to developing personal leadership is to believe in yourself first. Once you know you can accomplish anything you desire, you are ready to tackle the world and generate great personal success.

Even those not in management positions must begin to think like a leader. Position is unrelated to responsibility. Everyone who exhibits effective personal leadership and believes in themselves can become a leader and a positive role model.

The key leadership attitudes are:

- Be a great role model. Forget the old adage, "Do as I say, not as I do." Your actions, not your words, are the most important messages that you send to others.
- Maintain a great attitude about people. Believe that your people are self directed and will work for personal growth and increased responsibility. Expect your staff to exhibit personal leadership and help them to continually grow to new levels.
- Be personally motivated. Think of yourself as a thoroughbred that runs to win. You act to meet your personal needs and desires. Motivation is internal, not external.

- Inspire people to build their internal motivation by building motivation in yourself and by challenging everyone to be the best.
- Improve yourself even just 1% a month, a tiny amount. Through the miracle of compounding, you will double your effectiveness in less than 5 years. This powerful motivator gives you control over your life and can double your effectiveness several times over during your career.
- Finally, work for yourself. Once you discover the great truth that your employer is paying you to work for yourself, you will realize that work is a blessing, not a burden. The better you hone your personal leadership skills, the more success you will bring to yourself.

Steps to Develop Personal Leadership

The following proven, simple but sometimes difficult to follow steps will help you develop more success through personal leadership. Develop the conviction and courage needed to accomplish change. You can make personal changes although these changes will take time and effort. Take these steps:

- Write your goals down. Know yourself and your present condition so you can be realistic about where you are going. Writing your goals crystallizes your thoughts and forces you to be realistic and logical. You are able to build a solid foundation.
- Develop an action plan. A large dream can be overwhelming so break your goals into manageable pieces and define the steps necessary to accomplish them. Then put the steps into a logical sequence.
- Do the most important step of all: schedule your action steps. Make appointments with yourself to accomplish your action steps so that your busy life and the many competing demands on your time do not derail you. When you plan, you will take the steps necessary to create future success.
- Track and measure results so you know where you are. Items you track and measure get accomplished. When you make steady progress, you are much less likely to experience personal doubts. As you track your success you can enjoy your accomplishments.

Summary

Personal leadership, whether at the CEO level or at the supervisory level, will bring you great personal rewards. You, as an effective personal leader, will develop a strong success attitude that gives you:

- The freedom to choose your own path to success.
- The confidence that you are following the life plan that is right for you.
- The elimination of confusion and frustration that comes from trying to please others.
- The challenge and excitement of developing all of your own potential.

Strong personal leadership also gives the organization a competitive advantage in today's compressed, highly competitive business cycle.

Effective CEOs take the attitude for themselves and their management team that “If you don’t grow, you go.” They understand that when they exhibit personal leadership as they strive to evolve the organization to the next level, they also provide a role model for their employees, who must accept and lead change.

In the resulting culture, employees meet their personal goals by helping the organization meet its goals. Personal growth translates into organizational success.

Robert Schuller provided us with a great personal vision statement that you can use in your 1% growth plan when he said, "Whatever you do today, do it better tomorrow."

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