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A REASON TO FOLLOW

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Operating from a core set of principles and honing key business skills will position you for an effective leadership role.

All organizations rise and fall according to their leadership. Bad leadership has caused many formerly successful organizations to crash and burn, while good leadership has raised others from the ashes. Leadership is about getting everyone on the team working together toward common goals in which they believe, are committed to, and are excited about. The acronym TEAM says it all: Together Everyone Accomplishes More. Teamwork is critical for organizations of all sizes. You can't do it all yourself. You need ideas and suggestions from your employees. They have experience and education that can help you in your decision making.

WHAT LEADERS DO

Put simply, leaders show the way and inspire people to follow. No matter what traits you have or whether you're an introvert or an extrovert, you can become a better leader. What would inspire people to follow you? You'll inspire people if they share your vision and beliefs. People will follow you if:

1. They share your vision. If you don't know where you're going, people can't follow. Have a vision of where you want your organization to be in 10, 15, and 20 years. Your vision will evolve as your organization evolves. When a ship puts out to sea, it must have a destination. People will follow you if they're excited about where you're going.
2. They believe in your purpose. What is your organization's fundamental purpose other than making money? How do you contribute to society, improve people's lives, and make the world a better place? Of course, you must make money in order to achieve your organization's fundamental purpose, but just making money doesn't inspire people. An exciting and meaningful purpose turns work into worthwhile fun. People will follow you if they're excited about your purpose.
3. They have the same values. Fundamental values lie at the heart of an organization's identity. They don't change over time, and they aren't contrived or a matter of convenience. They're the glue that holds the organization together and guides every decision. They may be, but aren't necessarily, moral or ethical in nature. One of Joseph Schlitz Brewing Company's values was to "use only the best ingredients." But when the company compromised and started using cheaper ingredients to boost profits, people stopped buying its beer, and eventually it went out of business. Never compromise your values.
4. They agree with your operating principles. Your fundamental operating principles are basic strategies and philosophies that define how your business operates. Operating principles aren't standard operating procedures (SOPs), but rather they're how your organization does things. A good example is Southwest Airlines's principle of flying only 737s, which meant every pilot could fly every plane, every mechanic could work on every plane, and only one set of parts was needed. One of Espy Lumber's operating principles is weekly and monthly

meetings with management and all employees. Reclamation by Design, a custom home builder, says that they “limit the amount of work to what we can control and manage. There will always be more opportunities.” People will follow you if they like and believe in the way you operate.

5. They understand why. How do you feel when you’re asked to do something that makes no sense to you? Whether someone agrees with “why” you want to do something or not, they’re much more inclined to follow you if they understand your reasoning.
6. They believe you care about them. Would you follow someone if you feel they don’t really care about you as a person? Numerous studies have shown that appreciation is a greater motivator than money. Appreciation is more than a pat on the back. It means listening to people and their ideas and giving them credit if their ideas are adopted. If you can’t implement their ideas, then explain why not.
7. They trust you. People will follow you if they trust you. If people trust and embrace the decision-making process, they’re more likely to trust and embrace the decision. Research by Paul Zac at Claremont University in California shows that employees in a high-trust organization are more productive, have more energy at work, stay with their employer longer, and are more likely to recommend their workplace. Sharing information builds trust, and employees will stick with you even in bad times if they trust you.

LEADERSHIP SKILLS

What leadership skills do you need to develop to create an atmosphere that people want to support and stay with? Here are a few:

- People skills;
- Acceptance of responsibility for mistakes and the ability to learn from them;
- Listening skills: You have two ears and one mouth, so use them proportionally;
- Growth plan: People want to know they have a future with your organization; and
- Openness: Leaders embrace contrary opinions to learn from those who disagree.

As your leadership skills develop and you establish your vision, purpose, values, and operating principles, you will:

- Improve cooperation across business functions,
- Find the right employees,
- Keep star employees,
- Make consistent decisions, and
- Keep meetings on point.

Improving your leadership skills is a lifelong journey, and the benefits to both you and your organization are well worth the time and effort. You may never be the best leader in the world, but you can always be better than you are now. As Don Brashears, board chair of the Bluffton, S.C., Chamber of Commerce, so eloquently stated: “When you are finished learning and changing, you are finished.”

IMA LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

The IMA® Leadership Academy provides leadership opportunities for all members. From leadership assessment to leadership courses offered in person as well as through WebEx to participation opportunities in mentoring, be it reverse or traditional, the IMA Leadership Academy can help you meet your leadership goals and improve your leadership skills. For more information, please visit the Leadership Academy website at www.imanet.org/career-resources/leadership-academy.



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2 COMMENTS

LORI COLLINS APRIL 10, 2019 AT 1:18 PM

Perfectly said. People don’t buy what you do, but why you do it!

DR WILLIAM STANKIEWICZ APRIL 10, 2019 AT 12:55 PM

GREAT JOB ROY Keep in touch, Bill Stankiewicz

CEO

Savannah Supply Chain