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### **Leadership Provides Purpose, Direction & Takes Action**

Just like the poem, *Three Blind Mice*, many businesses don't know what true leadership is all about. A person sent me the following comments:

*"I'm still struggling with the lack of "alleged" leadership traits in many executives. How do they achieve executive positions? Why don't they seek out training to develop/enhance their leadership skills? Why do they assume that their subordinates need training but they don't? What actually is the essence of leadership? How can we teach executives to think strategically, to plan, to envision and to leave operational decisions to managers? Any thoughts?"*

Sad to say, but I hear this comment far too often. Sounds like this person is working for a person who needs a few lessons on leadership. True leadership is about taking people to a place they wouldn't go to by themselves. Good leaders don't merely supervise; they create a sense of purpose and direction for those they lead. After holding leadership positions and teaching leadership classes for 24 years, I am beginning to believe that some people have a natural ability to lead, have a passion, a burning desire to make a difference. Those are the people I want to work for.

A strong company is one that has leaders spread all across the company, not just at the top. The business world today needs both good leaders and good managers. However, because of the rapid change occurring in industry today, a company needs far more leaders, not more managers.

Time after time again, businesses put the wrong person in charge. Unintentionally they reward a "don't rock the boat" mentality. Conformity and status quo are the first steps leading down the staircase of a business disaster. This is partly the reason Sears, Zayres, IBM and Howard Johnson's et al. got in trouble. A major part of being a good leader is making people uncomfortable, uncomfortable with conformity that is.

All of us in leadership positions need to evaluate our actions. Are you providing a positive example for others to follow? Are you leading or managing? Are you effective at what you do? Maybe its time for a self-assessment? Zig Ziglar says, "A check-up from the neck-up." Look at these leadership self-assessments to give you an idea of where you stand and where your managers stand as effective leaders. <http://www.chartcourse.com/ttiassessmts.html>

Leadership Action Steps:

- ◆ Give your ego a break and ask your people, "What I should stop doing? "What I should keep doing?" and what do I need to start doing?" Ask them frequently, "What can I do to make your job better, easier or more productive?" Then do it.
- ◆ Good is no longer good enough. Be always on the look out to improve, change and renew everything the business does.
- ◆ Give people direction and purpose. Be able to tell people how their job individually impacts on the overall company mission.
- ◆ Make it part of the company culture to put managers and staff in the field to work with front-

line workers multiple days/hours all year long.

- ◆ Reduce unnecessary regulations and policies. Place a container or paint a mailbox red and centrally place it for people to deposit all dumb rules and regulations needing revision or elimination. Form a team to evaluate each nomination. Celebrate with a bonfire burning the policies and procedures no longer needed.
- ◆ If you haven't already, start a system of education and training for everyone in the business.
- ◆ A leader is a teacher. As a leader, you should be teaching some of your own classes.
- ◆ Be willing to admit your mistakes.
- ◆ Be quick to deal with individuals who are poisoning the attitudes and performance of others.
- ◆ Allow your workers the ability to reward each other's performance. Peer pressure is a terrific tool to create the behavior you need for success.
- ◆ Conduct frequent, informal recognition/award celebrations for workers.
- ◆ Give employees permission to disagree with management.
- ◆ Instead of only having the "Best Employee of the Month/Year" etc...recognize individuals for different reasons.
- ◆ Periodically challenge your people with BHAG's. (Big Harry Audacious Goals) Generate some friendly competition between departments.
- ◆ Have your team establish guiding principles to help them take initiative and stay on course.
- ◆ Take your people off-site and visit other business establishments to get new ideas. Then reward them for implementing those ideas. Have contests for the best idea of the month.
- ◆ Don't be afraid to have your staff evaluate your performance. Use a 360-degree evaluation instrument to get feedback. If you don't have one, call us.

Free by fax: If you would information on our leadership self-assessment, please fax your letterhead with the words "Assessment" to 770-760-0581.

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