Become an effective leader

Make people glad to do what you want.
Use these seven timeless leadership principles.

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Effective leaders are principle-centered and driven by values instead of by "image." Seven timeless principles of leadership (see Table 1) are a return to truths that were important years ago and somehow got dropped along the way. They revolve around two secrets practiced by effective leaders through the ages. 1. Be sure people know what's expected of them. 2. Follow up. Let people know what they do right as well as when corrective action is necessary. Follow-up is a "power tool" for good leaders. It lets people know you care. How do you put these principles into practice? Here are four tips for effective leaders. When practiced, they will ensure you are leading according to the seven principles. 1. Get to know the people in your organization, build relationships based on trust and "walk the talk." 2. Define expectations for each person in your organization, clearly communicate them to each individual and follow up. 3. Lead people and manage things. 4. Be consistent and persistent in learning and applying leadership skills.

SEVEN TIMELESS LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES

Lead with integrity. Integrity is defined as adherence to a code of moral values. Although the dictionary definition of integrity is impor-

Table 1. Seven timeless leadership principles that work.

1. Lead with integrity
2. Accept responsibility
3. Establish goals/implement plans
4. Respect individuals and families
5. Continue to learn
6. Expect results
7. Be sincere

tant, the working definition is more important. The working definition of integrity means honesty in all business dealings, truthfulness with customers, suppliers and employers. It means doing what's right. The successful businesses are those that abide by the fundamental principle of "doing what's right." As we focus on the issue of integrity, think about situations in your own life, business and work experience when someone has not been truthful? How do you feel about that? As a leader how do you feel if you haven't been truthful with the people who report to you?

Buzzwords are being used in business that may deceive employees. For example, reengineering is sometimes used by corporations as a euphemism for layoffs. This leads to long-term problems in implementing solutions to business problems because employees lose trust in their leaders.

Fairness in the way leaders treat employees is another aspect of leading with integrity. Employees are quick to take note of "injustice" in the work place. Fairness must be perceived by those who report to you or else charges of favoritism show up. Effective leaders administer policies equitably and make job assignments fairly. "Is it right? Is it fair?" are two questions that must be continually considered in leading people.

Integrity in leadership is also demonstrated by how well commitments are kept. Keeping commitments involves honesty, trust and integrity. Most people do not consider showing up at 10:15 a.m. when you had agreed on 10 a.m. to be dishonest. It is simply not keeping a commitment. Another example may be in the commitments maintenance gives operations about the length of time necessary for equipment repairs. Credible leaders are careful when making commitments to be certain they are kept.

Leaders do the right thing. They do the right thing even though it is not easy. Leaders value being fair, committed and truthful. They work to earn trust and respect. Leading with integrity is about values and principles.

Accept responsibility. The effective leader is willing to "take the heat" or accept total responsibilities of the position. In my tenure as department supervisor, one foreman always "passed the buck." He would blame management for any policy that had to be implemented or work rule that had to be obeyed—but was glad to take credit when things were

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For the first 150–170 years of our nation's history, leadership was primarily principles or values centered.[1] For the past 50–70 years there has been a shift to "image awareness" or "what looks good." This trend is becoming prevalent in the work place, and is causing a "credibility gap" in many organizations. For an organization to prosper, credible, effective leadership is imperative.

Effective leaders know that establishing trust is the basis for solid relationships rather than positional power or authority. The return to values based and principle-centered leadership is a return to what worked in the later 19th and early 20th centuries. It's nothing new. Simply stated, "values-based leadership holds, in essence, that if you and I share certain values—like truth and honesty—the bond between us will be stronger and more effective than if we simply follow the same commands."[2]

Has diversity in the work place affected leadership? Yes. The more diverse the work force, the harder the leader must work to overcome old barriers and prejudices to build bridges of trust and credibility. This means "walk the talk." Don't just say the right thing, do it.

There are a lot of new buzzwords: servant leadership, values-based leadership, post-heroic leadership or whatever flavor-of-the-month comes up next. Leadership is getting someone else to do something you want done because they want to do it, according to General Dwight Eisenhower. Solid relationships, built on credibility and trust, are the keys to leadership success. Credible and effective leaders build relationships by walking the talk, building trust and treating people with dignity and respect.

These are not new concepts. A careful study of the following quote reveals relevance for today: "It would seem in this enlightened age much of this could be improved by improved interpersonal relations. Distrust is usually based on selfishness and selfishness is encouraged by lack of knowledge of one another."[3] That was written in 1911.

going well. This resulted in lack of trust and respect by employees and management, and loss of his job.

An effective leader is willing to stand for what is right and recognizes times when "the buck stops here." The higher you are in the organization, the more important this becomes. The CEO accepts the profit/loss statement and bears full responsibility for the company's performance. We all know she or he didn't actually "get those results" but is responsible just the same.

There are several specific situations when it is not appropriate for leaders to delegate duties or responsibilities. These are[4] 1. Fielding the "fall out" from sudden changes. 2. Reprimands, discharges and praise. 3. Policy making. 4. Final, win or lose decisions.

Define goals and implement plans. Without goals you don't know where your business is going or where you are going. Carefully set goals for your business and develop a plan to reach them. The process often stops with the plan. Many business leaders have goals and plans, but fail to implement the plan. Action and follow-up are required to implement plans. Pay attention to details and follow up continually. Revise your goals and plans as you go along. Dr. W. E. Deming, quality management expert, said that most managers set forth goals with no plan to achieve them.

Today, speed, quality and cost are major issues to consider in any business. Businesses must concentrate on doing it better, faster and cheaper than the competition. Manufacturers must be able to recognize shifts in the market place and act quickly to stay ahead of the competition. Lower inventories, just-in-time (JIT) deliveries and cost pressures require realistic strategies and plans for a business to prosper.

The purpose of planning is not to have an academic exercise. It is to develop strategies for success in your business. Effective leaders set goals, develop plans and follow through by implementing the plans.

Respect individuals and families. Workers expect to be treated with dignity and respect. The "in

your face" and "intimidation" approach does not work. Research indicates that people respond to praise and respect better than to punishment and sarcasm. Admittedly, some employees will respond positively to a leader who instills fear and degrades his/her employees, but most respond negatively.

Respect for an employee is frequently demonstrated in the way work assignments are made. It is more effective to ask an employee to perform a task than it is to order the task performed. For example, "Sue, do you think the report on the cracking unit can be completed by the 15th?" This approach demonstrates that you respect Sue and also allows her to explain if there is a valid reason the report will not be ready. The approach that does not demonstrate respect for the individual would be, "Sue, get that cracking unit report on my desk by the 15th." In this scenario Sue may let important, higher-priority items suffer because the "boss said to get the report done!" Treating employees with dignity and respect is simple. Be courteous and treat people like you want to be treated.

What about an employee's family? That is a tough issue. You say, "I thought work meant we sacrifice the family." Corporations with progressive leaders know that if an employee is not satisfied at home then the employee won't be productive. As Mark McCormick said in the book, *What They Don't Teach You At The Harvard Business School,* "what you do for an employees' family is more important than what you do for the employee." The family usually hears only the negative from work. It is the leaders responsibility to get the positive information home. One technique that gets information to the family is to mail letters of praise and/or company announcements to the home. The most important positive message that you can send through the employee is you respect their role as a wife, mother, husband, father, son, daughter or whatever the relationship is in their family. There are times family comes before work. Good leaders know their employees well enough to recognize those times. The principle, respect individuals and families, requires a

leader to know the people in the organization.

Continue to learn. Leadership skills and technical expertise are learned. Experience is a great teacher in the learning process, but not the only teacher. It has been said, people in industry have "X" years experience, but in reality, may have only one year of experience, "X times" over because they failed to learn from their experiences.

An effective leader learns people, processes and products in his or her organization. "Continuing education" for leaders in any industry is required.

Many engineers who move into leadership positions have had little or no formal training in leadership. If you are in that situation—learn. Attend seminars or classes, study good books, talk with experienced leaders you respect and read business journals. It is necessary to assign a high priority to personal growth or it is easily set aside for other priorities. Growth must be a high priority. Successful leaders continue to learn and grow throughout their careers.

Technical competence comes easier than leadership competence, because the most technically proficient person is promoted or given the new assignment. Total responsibility for a processing unit is different from the technical support role. Technical competence for supervisors includes the processes and products, but also encompasses safety, environmental and quality responsibilities. Again, be willing to learn all areas to be a technically competent leader.

School is never out for leaders. You must always strive for improved competence in your job. Learn your job and the jobs of two or three others to be competent. Learn by "OPE" other people's experience, life's too short to learn it all by your own experience.

Expect results. Effective leaders pay attention to details, define expectations and expect results. One of the problems in organizations today is people don't know what's expected of them. Another problem is managers measure activity instead of results.

A good leader overcomes these

performance barriers by clearly defining results based on expectations for his or her employees. (Even CEOs need expectations. An article in the *Wall Street Journal* in 1993 said that over 80% of CEO's did not feel a clear sense of direction from their board of directors.) Many employees are frustrated because their supervisors fail to clearly define or discuss expectations. Clearly communicate expectations, expect results and follow up to see the results are obtained.

An example of the importance of clearly understood expectations occurred with one of our clients. The President said his top managers were not performing up to his standards. Upon further questioning, I observed that he had not clearly defined his expectations. I asked him to write down the three to five basic expectations that must be met and then discuss them with each person involved. His response was, "We've been working together for years so they know." After a bit of discussion, he agreed to follow the suggestion. He was awed by the positive reception from those involved and at the "performance improvement." Later he told me, "My expectations had changed over the past few years and I had not fully understood or communicated those changes."

Be sincere. Be sincere in actions involving employees. If you are not sincere about leadership, integrity, goals and plans, respecting individuals and families or expecting results, employees will know it. They will sense your lack of sincerity and you limit your success as a leader. Most people know when their leader is "faking it." Be sincere in your dealings with employees because your effectiveness is directly related to the effectiveness of the people who report to you. You will never be more successful than they are.

MANAGEMENT VS. LEADERSHIP

It has been said that you manage things and lead people. Often we try to manage people, but the only person we can really manage is ourselves. We lead others. Management involves five basic functions: 1) planning 2) organizing 3) staffing 4) directing and 5) controlling. Leadership is the art of getting people to do what you want done because they want to do it. The basic differences in management and leadership are shown in Table 2.

Managers create efficiency in an organization by controlling things and directing the work to be done. Leaders create a workplace where empowered people can be effective in their jobs. The result of management is efficiency in operation and the result of leadership is effective people doing their job. Both are necessary to be the low cost, high-quality producer. Effective leaders will recognize the differences between management and leadership and apply the right methods in the right areas. Management techniques are for systems and procedures. Leadership techniques apply to the people side of the business.

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Table 2. Basic differences in management and leadership

Management vs. Leadership	
Things	People
Control	Empowerment
Directs	Coaches
Efficiency	Effectiveness