

The Leader As a Role Model

Nine Factors for Successful Leadership

The question arises again and again as to what are the attributes of a successful leader. As always, there is no pat answer. However, our experience reveals the following nine factors for successful leadership that indicate a broad range of personality characteristics at the personal level which are routinely required of an leader.

Radiate Self Confidence and Energy

It is not necessary to be a charismatic leader to be a successful executive, but without the dedication, without the executive being committed to the task, leadership will not function. People want to follow a person who is convinced that he is doing the right thing and champions this with the necessary energy. Whether this is equivalent to charisma is a good question and depends on the definition of charisma. The important thing is that the leader infuses his ideas, concepts, and visions with the proper amount of emotion so that the employees can see that he the issues seriously.

To radiate self-confidence, certainty, and energy, it is naturally necessary to possess this self-confidence. It is not helpful for a leader to attempt to convey self-confidence to employees when this is not the case. The first step is to build up self-confidence and only then will the employees notice that the leader is serious.

Self Control

Self control is an essential aspect of a leader's personality that allows him to act prudently even in critical situations. This does not mean that a leader should not react emotionally at times. On the contrary - the leader's emotional involvement strengthens the leadership process considerably. But it means that a leader should

always keep on top of things in critical phases, when things can get muddled. The leader thus takes on the role of a pilot who has to guide a ship safely into the harbor when seas are rough.

Be Consistent, Predictable, Firm, and Fair

These personality traits mean that the leader does only what he says he will and is clear and unambiguous about it. In addition, it is commendable if the leader demands no more of others than what he is also willing to do himself. And vice versa, the leader must deal with employees' expectations that he comply with his own demands, figuratively speaking, with respect to his own tasks. For example, it is absolutely indispensable that a leader who demands honesty and other socially desired values also incorporates them in himself. If a leader demands that employees keep promises and are reliable and that they give prompt notice if there are any possible conflicts with due dates, the leader must also do the same or risk causing employees to give up. Moreover, strong leaders act consistently in comparable situations and do not stumble from one situation to the next.

Be Methodical and Transparent

Leaders who convey self-assurance because they show employees clearly that they have a plan that, in an ideal situation, the employees can help with, enjoy a high level of trust. The methodical and transparent handling of procedures, figures, data, and facts is an instrument that is essential for including employees in the work of the division and giving them responsibility. A leader who proceeds methodically and deals with information in a transparent manner will always be more successful than a leader who keeps a lid on information. This requires a certain amount of stature, for giving information always entails giving up some power.

See the Big Picture and the Details

Only if you see the whole picture can you lead a team to the goal. "It is better to see the big picture more or less clearly than see the details perfectly" is a valid premise, but if the overwhelming size of the big picture makes you lose sight of the details, you cannot tell whether a sum of slight deviations might possibly lead to a failure of the entire system. Moreover, details of employees and customers are frequently seen more readily than changes to the overall picture. It is thus important for a leader to see both the big picture and envision a picture of the future as well as being able to keep an eye on details. If a leader determines that he tends more to one side or another, he should regularly consult someone who emphasizes the other aspect.

Challenge and Support

The leader who is capable of both challenging and supporting employees demonstrates balance and shows that he banks on performance and also ensures that employees have room for development. Challenging employees is important so that employees in a position to recognize the expectations made of them. Supporting them is important because the employees should know that the leader is interested in the individual development of every single employee.

Be Customer Oriented

Customer-oriented thinking and acting includes the fundamental personal willingness of a leader to serve. The term 'service' stems from 'serve' and the serving aspect cannot be stressed enough. Success is almost guaranteed for a leader who can direct his own actions and the actions of employees to the needs of internal and

external customers. In order to ensure that this is done in a targeted manner, the leader should work with the employees to identify the following – for whom are we providing our services? For the sales department, this is relatively. The answer is “for the customers.” But who are the customers for accounting, the personnel department, or controlling? The most important point of view that a leader can convey within his sphere of influence is that all salaries, materials, etc. are paid by the external customers, for if the customers did not demand the company’s products and services the whole business with all its employees, buildings, and products would not exist. The basic position of the leader must be driven by the question, “How can we make things better, simpler, faster, easier, cheaper, or more effective for our internal or external customers (for the benefit of all)?”

Create and Maintain Value

The area of value is often underestimated and is frequently equated with material values. But this is more about a normative structure that should be conveyed by the leader and shaped with the aid of employees. A leader who is capable of creating and maintaining values regularly poses himself and his employees the question, “What does the company stand for?” or “What does the department or the division stand for?” Values and the personal relationships among the employees of a division are the emotional glue in the team. The values determine how conflicts are carried out, whether the employees stand by the company and their boss even in times of crisis, the level of dedication, of sick reports, of productivity. A commonly held set of values is an essential component of the company culture.