



Essentials of a generation *next* leader

DEVELOPING good leadership skills is not something that happens overnight. Learning how to be a good leader is an ongoing process and a destination where you will never quite 'arrive', because there's always the opportunity to learn.

As the old saying goes, "The biggest room in the world is the room for improvement", which shows there is more to leadership. Albert Einstein, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, and Jack Welch, were great leaders in the past whose leadership strategies still serve as experiential models for today's leaders to follow. The ever changing business realm, however, demands more. What then are the essential characteristics that define a potential leader for the next generation of businesses? And how can an individual position himself for leadership consideration?

"The key to successful leadership today is influence, not authority"
Kenneth Blanchard

The Big Picture

The first quality to look out for in a future leader is the 'power of vision'. A leader will display horizontal and vertical knowledge of the whole organization as well as its immediate and future needs. They hold the big picture in mind which consequently shapes their relationships, conduct and mindset about the organization and its people.

Competence

According to Howard Hendricks, "The secret of concentration is elimination." One key trait for future leadership is the ability to determine one's area of strength/competence and the ability to be open about one's weaknesses.

Doing so much does not justify effectiveness, but the impact that every action contributes to the overall objective is critical.

Potential leaders focus their energies towards the discharge of quality service to team objectives in their area of strength, while appreciating the power of team work as a way to navigate through their weaknesses. Leadership for the future demands individuals who 'work smart' and achieve results.

"Leadership, like swimming, cannot be learned by reading about it."

Henry Mintzberg,



Courage

Courage is an important character for a leader. Challenges of business are always on the increase and diverse. It takes courage to defy the odds to face the reality of the changing times.

It also takes courage to appreciate and initiate a change process. Courage is needed to differentiate, act and enshrine due diligence and integrity in a chaotic atmosphere. Courage is what will uphold value in the face of threatening challenges and enable ethical dealings and professionalism in business.

"Contrary to the opinion of many people, leaders are not born. Leaders are made, and they are made by effort and hard work"

Vince Lombardi

Systemic Thinking

A dynamic organization requires a focused vision and a blend of diverse perspectives. Leadership requires people whose

thought patterns are cross-bordered. Individuals are free to hold certain beliefs to be true. However, the ability to blend all of the significant elements from a variety of thoughts shows good leadership potential.

Systemic thinking implies that you can see through other people's eyes as well as the ability to exhibit listening skills. Leaders think through their job beyond normal reasoning and contribute great ideas for growth.

"Lead, follow or get out of the way!"

Anonymous

Influence

Another essential attribute is influence. John Maxwell says that "Leadership is influence." Next generation leaders are those who command respect and influence across the broad spectrum of their organization. They give support, counsel and mentor as well as coach people. They also help

others achieve their personal and work objectives.

Character

Character is what defines a leader. It is the picture that people visualize in you. Next generation leaders are those who take pride

in impacting enduring legacies that speak further into the future. Some of their characteristics are; integrity, consistency, responsibility, discipline, effective self leadership, listening skills positive attitude, people skills and confidence, to mention a few.

"The single biggest way to impact an organization is to focus on leadership development. There is almost no limit to the potential of an organization that recruits good people, raises them up as leaders and continually develops them"

John C Maxwell

People often aspire to get to the top and expect to someday hold positions of leadership, but how ready are to lead? The future of businesses will obviously change with present realities; it is therefore expedient to begin the journey now.

Business leaders can begin to identify these traits in their people and create the atmosphere to excel. Furthermore, employees who seek to lead their organizations in the future need to begin to display the characters attributed with good leadership.

Leadership is a journey without a specific destination, the further you go, the more the need to continue to explore. According to Dr. Myles Munroe, "Trapped within every follower is a hidden leader." He goes further to state that "When the attitude of leadership is married to the ability of leadership, then you are a true leader." Future generation leaders need to identify the need of the evolving business as well as the individual characters that make a leader before they can actually lead. The journey needs to begin from now.

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Merry Xmas
&
Happy New Year
from
People's Digest

Identifying, developing leadership potentials in organisations

IDENTIFYING and developing employees with leadership potential is critical to the success of organizations. Sadly, many companies have relegated this important issue to the background and this has led to increased employee turnover in the workplace today.

As the 360 Degree Leader Principle suggests, leadership is a task for every member of an organization. Nevertheless, it is important to understand that spaces at top level positions of organizations are minimal and are exclusively reserved for visionaries and result-driven individuals.

Furthermore, with the economic downturn and the challenges of the global market place, some organisations have come to realize the need to invest in their top talent employees as a way to achieve optimal returns on investment as well as engage their continued contribution to the growth of the organization.

It is imperative to establish a system that identifies and develops leadership potentials. The following are reasons why leadership assessment and development should assume a prominent place in progressive organisations:

- Retention of top talent employees.
- Organic growth across the organization.
- Continuity of corporate culture, protection of organizational values and best practices as well as maintenance of corporate governance.
- Succession planning.

“Be gentle and you can be bold; be frugal and you can be liberal; avoid putting yourself before others and you can become a leader among men.”

Lao Tze

The present workplace is populated by young people who are seeking challenging work environments that will provide the opportunity for their career advancement as well as growth within the organization. When these career demands cannot be visualized or met, they are forced to make new career moves. As a result of this, many businesses lose valuable players to competitors.

In the book, “Built to Last”, Jim Collins analyzed the leadership potentials development and succession planning process employed by General Electric’s CEO, Reginald Jones, to identify and develop a new CEO for his Corporation. The process involved 96 candidates over a seven year period before the emergence of the single successor and leader: Jack Welsh.

This system of succession planning has been effective at GE as it produced not only Welsh, but all of his predecessors as well. These leaders have driven success at various periods in the life of GE, working within the organization’s best practices and corporate governance as well as maintain continuity in corporate culture.

To a great extent, an organization’s long-term success and viability depends on its capacity to develop a strong leadership base within its ranks,



not just at the top level. It is critical to the actualization of organizational goals and should be treated as a major aspect of business activities. Some emergencies often occur that creates yawning vacuum within the organisation – exit or death of a top manager/leader – urgently demanding a replacement. The key questions are: have you identified potential leadership candidates? Who within your organization has the potential to succeed you? And how long will it take before they are prepared to take that seat? Does your organization have an existing system that supports leadership development?

“The very essence of leadership is that you have to have a vision. It’s got to be a vision you articulate clearly and forcefully on every occasion. You can’t blow a weak trumpet.”

Theodore Hesburgh, President, Notre Dame University, Time, May 1987

The following are some characteristics that define leadership potentials:

- Display of both vertical and horizontal competencies.
- Broad knowledge across the organization.
- Passionate and opinionated.
- Uphold and assume ownership of the corporate and ethical values, vision, best practices.
- Display of commitment to organizational goal beyond the expected level.
- Result-orientation and the drive to make impact.
- Display of intellectual honesty and dissatisfaction with status quo.

- Problem solver, challenge driven and receptive to change.
- Constantly pursuing learning and growth.
- Display of integrity and responsibility.
- Command of respect and influence.

How can organisations develop these leadership potentials?

Recruitment:

The first step and crucial point is to establish and maintain a recruitment system that attracts top talents and those who clearly exhibit leadership attributes. The Human Resources department needs to establish job profiles and competency frameworks that support leadership and grooming from within. This can be executed through considerable time invested in defining the acceptable leadership characteristics and how they impact the business as a whole.

Human Resources should continuously evaluate existing and potential top talent and leadership potentials within the organization. It is also essential to identify the gaps in talent and the leadership pool which should feed into the organization’s recruitment drive.

According to David Ogilvy, Founder, Ogilvy and Mather advertising agency, “if each of us hires people who are smaller than we are, we shall become a company of dwarfs. But if each of us hires people who are bigger than we are, we will become a company of giants.” Your recruitment and selection process is mission critical.

“The best leader is the one who has sense enough to pick good men to do what he wants done, and the self-restraint to keep from

meddling with them while they do it.”

Theodore Roosevelt, American President

Leadership Modelling:

According to Lee Iacocca, “The speed of the boss is the speed of the team.” Organisations need to model desired leadership by setting examples and planning small wins. In order to do this effectively, you must express clarity of what the philosophy and vision of the organization actually is. Then lead in that direction while potentials follow. It is important to always test your actions against the standards to ensure you are not derailing or setting a negative model. The vision of the organization plays a major role in modelling future leadership, consequently, you need to help identified leadership potentials gain understanding of the big picture as well as generate buy-in and ownership.

Training and Leadership Development Plan:

Individual leadership development should be a deliberate plan within progressive organisations. Aside the recruitment of top talent, relevant trainings are essential. But beyond the generic or specific trainings as related to an employee’s role, leadership coaching and mentoring is recommended. An organization’s deliberate efforts towards grooming potential leadership successors can generate loyalty and a promising future as well as healthy competition. Personal growth inspires commitment and loyalty but planning such a program should allow a long lead time and reflect the vision to develop the ‘whole person’. Real learning can happen only when staff members are encouraged to undertake serious development efforts, which always

require some degree of risk.

Delegating Significant Tasks.

Delegating significant tasks to your people will exude trust and also indicates your organisation’s commitment to developing leadership potentials from within. When a manager delegates the lead on a significant assignment – of which success or failure will impact massively on the organization – to an identified leadership potential, and grants a ‘thought to finish’ process support and coaching, then true leadership development can be engaged.

Repetition of this process through various other assignments creates a bond of trust between the leader and subordinate on one hand, and employee and the organization on the other. The success will boost the employee’s confidence while the challenges offer practical experiences for future tasks.

“Rough waters are truer tests of leadership. In calm water every ship has a good captain.”

Swedish proverb

Establish a transparent succession plan.

Define a transparent succession plan that keeps your top talent informed of the path to leadership as well as available support provided by the organization.

It is important to set the tenure of office for leadership positions. This will ensure the reality of succession planning as well as the importance of grooming potential leaders. It will also reflect the existence of individual growth opportunities within the hierarchical structure.

To develop in-house leadership potentials, it is important to maintain a balanced mix of ‘Specialists’ and ‘Generalists’. The specialists will require more of on-the-job developmental plan in sync with their area of operation, as well as increased challenges/responsibilities as a way to build their confidence and hands-on experience. The generalist’s developmental plan will require adequate exposure to a variety of job experiences across the organization.

Grooming future leaders is one of the most critical tasks for an organization’s leader. Without a well-defined and systemic approach to leadership potential development, the future of your organization might be jeopardized. A good leadership development process will take time and commitment from management, and must be a top priority.

According to John C. Maxwell, he said “The leaders should emulate gold prospectors, they are always on the lookout for potential goldmines... when they find traces of ore, they assume there is a vein and begin digging.”

Developing leadership potential begins with the leadership model; hence you need to exemplify the model of leadership you desire, and when you can ‘sniff’ potentials from your employees, you need to take immediate steps before they jump on the next train of career advancement.

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