

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP AT ALL LEVELS

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Introduction

Effective Leadership

We study Engineering, Accounting, Business Management, Computer Science and a host of other curriculums on our way to employment. Technical schools teach us Ohm's Law, Fundamental Physics, Chemistry, Electronics and Welding. Courses and complete degree programs in Leadership are available but for some reason, Effective Leadership is rarely taught in the disciplines found in our industry. While we admire sports heroes and winning coaches, how often do we admire winning CEOs or Managers? How many coaches, teachers or other people of influence have mentored us to success? How do we adapt the winning qualities we find in sports or college to Leadership in our careers? Sadly, Managers often lead or manage as they were managed. Traditions and bad habits persist as employees tolerate poor leadership and sometimes move to competition or out of the industry all together.

Market trends find us increasingly dependent upon technology with many managers believing computers, smart phones and elaborate SCADA networks enhance productivity to the point we are expected to accomplish more with less people; all in shorter periods of time. People need to communicate with each other effectively, taking time to use these tools to their advantage and not being bogged down because we can instantly communicate. Critical thinking skills and experience keep daily operations on the right path. Effective leadership sees communication tools for the positives they are, leveraging them to their fullest value, never overlooking the value of face to face communication.

Concepts in this writing are effectively applied to everyday business. Emergencies or military action require an entirely different set of Leadership skills. For our purposes, Effective Leadership consists of establishing a Vision and making it plain. The vision is carried out by someone with a passion for a cause larger than they are, with a dream that will better society through empowering people with clear communication of the vision, while providing the tools and Budgets necessary to excel and then staying out of the way. Empowering people to use their creativity to overcome obstacles is a significant element of effective leadership.

Corporate America is driven by Corporate Goals fulfilled by meeting existing and new client needs. Capturing new geography or adding products or services to an offering helps grow market share and hopefully profits. Federal Regulations for product Quality and measurement as well as Safety Compliance are outside influences that affect daily activities. Seemingly endless corporate policies and procedure additions or changes affect our behavior. Within these confines, we figure out how to do our job while maintaining integrity in a climate of sometimes humanly unrealistic schedules. With all our competitors considered, there are times we think our own company is our worst enemy. As new policies are established or worse yet a company establishes trends with "management by best seller;" change seems constant. How do we manage Consolidations, Mergers and Acquisitions when they affect our clients or worse yet, our company? How do Security Concerns affect our business and what about competition? In simple terms, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." Change for the sake of change is not necessarily good. For that matter, wasteful change compromises Management's credibility. Focus on what works well and leave it alone. Notice bottlenecks and repair them. Keep visions and goals simple and you will succeed.

There has never been a greater need for effective leadership. Let's dig into some areas where we can employ concepts at every level of our business. We can all adopt these principals to make us better employees and managers. The goal is to increase our effectiveness and efficiency while establishing a comfortable work life balance.

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESS

First, **Integrity** cannot be bought only built. Raised in a time where my "word was my bond" I have always aspired to do what I say I will do and in the time promised. Doing what is right for the right reason the root of integrity. If we could only pick one attribute of a Leader, it would have to be integrity. Cutting corners or claiming we completed something we did not do will compromise our integrity.

Leaders **Inspire Action**. We don't need to waste time talking about our accomplishments or elaborate on corporate requirements or goals. Leaders detail opportunity and provide the tools needed as they inspire others to action. In a slower pace, they help separate what matters from what is a waste of time. Effective Leaders buffer their employees from upper management, focusing on the goals while overcoming obstacles.

Optimism encourages action. No matter what we see wrong, it is a great exercise to be optimistic in how we are going to positively affect the outcome of our obstacle, challenge or opportunity.

We can't emphasize enough on how important **Supporting and Facilitating** is to the success of our Team. Provide the information needed, define expectations and provide every tool required for the task. Incite innovation. Encourage creative thinking to solve challenging problems.

Exude confidence in your employees as you share successes and kudos from management. Recognize positive behavior. As we have heard before reward in public and discipline in private. Support your employees when there is a challenge. You build loyalty among your team when they see you standing up for their decisions or work.

Communicating Effectively is the greatest way to insure positive progress. Know when it is best to use telephone, text or Email. Tailor your choice of communication to the response type you need. Leave the telephone to "time critical" exchanges. Keep Emails efficient; when greater detail may be needed. Actively use the Subject Line to clearly detail if FYI (for information only), technical bulletin or ACTION REQUIRED. Make sure texts are clear, concise and action packed.

"Please and thank you" can never be used enough; especially in texts, as short word bursts can be misinterpreted. Know yourself well enough to choose a certain time of the day for managing Emails. First thing in the morning is a good time, then right before noon and then thirty minutes before the end of the day. Get on your computer, get it done and get off even if it makes sense to turn of your Email provider. It is easy to spend the entire day instantly responding to the requests of others, many of which are not time sensitive at all. Prioritize; bosses messages first, then employees if in management. Be careful who you share your address with so you are not bogged down with unnecessary solicitations and a daunting list of messages, most of which are junk. Having more than one Email address has value as well. Consider unintended consequences when forwarding or copying others on Emails. Consider efficiency in every message.

Most of all, **be decisive** in your communication and requests to others. Clearly state dates if a deadline is involved. Leave yourself a buffer if compilation of data is required before reporting to management. Leave time for a follow-up request and reply if data is not complete.

5 LEVELS OF LEADERSHIP

Position is the lowest form of Leadership. People respect you because you are there manager; primarily because they are required. Defined as **permission**, as you establish credibility people then begin to follow because they want to. This is a huge step when their free will is engaged and they exhibit a desire to work together. **Production** is the stage when people follow you because of what you have done for your organization. You are known as a top producer. They respect your accomplishments and aspire to succeed in your footsteps. **People Development** consists of investing in your employees. People begin to follow because of what you have done for them. The **pinnacle** of Leadership is when people follow because of who you are and what you represent. We have established credibility because of our successes. Through investment, we have furthered respect. While we could see the pinnacle as the top level of accomplishment in leadership, it can be the shortest lived, once employees get to know you and possibly how you got to the top if you didn't accomplish with integrity. The perpetual leader is the one who develops and invests in their employees. Sometimes called **Servant Leadership**, it has the most lasting and beneficial value for an organization.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

In the Mid-90s, the Quality Process came into full bloom in America. Crosby, Deming and Juran were three Quality Gurus promoting the Quality Process. Documentation of processes was the root of the movement with "Continuous Improvement" a common goal. Applied to Leaders and us as individuals, the process requires "Self-Assessment." We must be careful to not become our own worst critic or worse yet be critical of management. Ideally, we recognize areas where we can do better and focus on improvement. When we see a spot where management could do better, or we can fill in a void with a proactive move, then this is a time to shine. My CPA often says as a business owner, one needs to take time to work on, not in the business. We sometimes get so busy we forget to assess where we are and where we are going. As a Leader, we must force ourselves to become a visionary. How big is our idea and how practical is it for us to pursue? John Maxwell refers to "the law of the lid." Another similar concept is called the "Peter Principal;" which basically says all people work to their area of inefficiency and then stay there with no hope of promotion. If we believe we can improve; **WHICH WE CAN**, then our focus fulfills a basic tenet of the Quality Process, working on ourselves or our organization as we recognize our areas needing improvement.

SCALING, the LAW of the LID and EGOS

The TV Show Shark Tank is comprised of 5 Multi-Millionaires and Billionaires listening to people pitch for money. If the Stars like an idea or concept, they invest in the company for a portion of ownership or Royalties from production. Often heard in the banter of the show is; "how do we scale this to the next level?" The investors are well connected in their respective fields and own portions of businesses in many walks of life. If you have a heart of an entrepreneur, your ideas can be leveraged to patents or businesses. Champion your good thoughts and flush the bad ones. Take time to objectively recognize the difference. If you think of a patentable idea, decide how you will fund the venture. Work within your company if there is provision or develop on your own. The most important thing to consider is potential market size. If the concept will save your company millions, patent inside with their

help. You own the patent yet the company owns the rights. There is no faster way to gain recognition for growth than to patent a concept or product in your field of interest.

You may wonder how this applies to leadership. Many leaders acquired their position by thinking outside the box. Always looking for a better way; innovating, thinking and creating. Mentioned before, Productivity is often rewarded by a Management or Leadership role. Balance is important; so don't be consumed by an idea as you lose sight of your daily responsibilities. Take care of your assignments and then focus on your idea, never losing sight of the Marketability of your process or product.

RBI Solutions is in the analyzer business. In 1996, a friend developed a \$450,000 CEMS or continuous emissions monitor designed for Environmental Monitoring. Today, a good CEMS can be assembled for about \$250,000. With constant dollars, about a third of the price. Mark had a great idea but the price didn't fit the market as CEMS don't make money, they just keep one from getting fines by the EPA for non-compliance. To Mark's defense, part of the development was writing the software for reporting; which remains a significant portion of a CEMS cost today. He had an amazing idea but was a little ahead of his time. With effective Marketing, he could have owned the market worldwide. He did not know how to scale the product or reach the world market. In this case, the first product was the prototype and most expensive. Others could have been built for ½ the price. Another friend developed a polymer analyzer, investing over \$100,000 in company profits in the late nineties. He never sold one analyzer.

RBI Solutions worked with a major oil company to develop a MWD (measurement while drilling) tool in the early 2000s. This engineer convinced his company to invest over a \$1,000,000 for a product that never worked effectively. Three misfires are mentioned to say; "never stop pitching but **always** keep your eye on your target." This means target market at the market price. Effective Leadership rewards innovation when it is kept in perspective. Never, never, never let your ego interfere with common sense. Seek input from others. Build friendships that will tell you the truth, not just make you feel good. Effective Leaders have friendships that will always shoot straight with them.

There is a book named "Isaac's Storm." Isaac was an MD, Meteorologist who lived in Galveston in 1900. The book is Isaac's recount of the storm that nearly wiped Galveston, Texas off the map. Two lessons from the book were the egocentric Washington Meteorologists who said if there is going to be an evacuation, we will order it from here. As things progressed and the storm intensified, while Isaac wanted to evacuate, his management would not make the call. Don't let your ego interfere with common sense.

Years before, Indianola was wiped off the map by a similar surge tide. They did not want to hamper potential growth of Galveston by forcing an unnecessary evacuation. Consequently, there were thousands of senseless deaths. The storm passed right over Puerto Rico or Cuba and they reported its intensity. Again, Washington egos would not issue the evacuation order. Another lesson from the story is always allow the person closest to the problem render a solution. Isaac had weathered many storms. He knew this one was different for he was a trained meteorologist. In Isaac's case, no amount of communication to Washington by telegraph was able to convince them to issue an evacuation order. Today, a picture is worth a thousand words. With mobile phones, often the best way to resolve a mechanical problem or the very least communicate the way things are. If only Isaac could have sent a photograph of the rising and churning sea along with all the other readings he had available in 1900. On a business note, we have successfully provided many ultrasonic flow meter solutions with dimensions and a photograph.

LEADERSHIP IS LIKE INVESTING

Anne Scheiber worked for the IRS as an attorney. She retired at 51 with a very small pension. Her salary in 1943 was only \$3,150 a year. She lived a very meager lifestyle and when she died at 101, fifty years later, she left an estate to a college of \$22,000,000. The simple observation from this story is she had a process of investing and did very well. Over a long period, she built a fortune. Good leaders invest in their company and the people they manage. As a Leader makes sacrifices and invests in people that work for them, their investment pays off in higher performance and happy employees.

80/20 RULE

We could not write about action without considering an equal and opposite reaction. Isaac Newton said for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. When applied to Management and Ultimately EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP, we must consider the consequences of our requests for action with how it will be perceived and activated by employees. The greatest part of business is “there are no RIGHT answers, only better solutions.” Most of our decisions are not life or death but can have consequences.

It has been said 80% of our results come from 20% of our activity. Focus on the 20% that gets the best results. Fill your day with the 20% winning activities and you have leveraged yourself to a higher level of performance and ultimately on your way to becoming a more effective manager.

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Ultimate Leadership comes through empowering and serving our employees as we watch them soar in their accomplishments and growth in the company. The original concept was promulgated over 2000 years ago. In 1970, Robert Greenleaf coined the phrase in an essay entitled “The Servant as Leader.” An excerpt states:

"The servant-leader *is* servant first... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first*. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is *leader* first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions...The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types. Between them there are shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature."

"The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, *while being served*, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? *And*, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit or at least not be further deprived?"

When we empower employees to make decisions on how to meet goals and genuinely take interest in their personal lives, families and hobbies we reach a place where we can encourage them to accomplish more than they ever thought they could. Servant Leadership is taking time to learn each employee well enough to match tasks with their expertise. Continuously investing in training and new challenges keeps employees fresh. Take time to listen when they have a particularly challenging situation. Encourage them to think it through. Sometimes it takes longer but the process develops innovative and creative thinking, not dependency you or others.

SUMMARY

Effective Leadership doesn't just happen. We develop our skills over time. By observing our own actions, effectively assessing each situation; always working to improve communication efficiency, we maneuver our Team into the best position for success. As a good chess player, the Leader is always four or five moves ahead of the current position. Balance vision as you stay in the moment and you and your Team of employees will soar with great accomplishment. We too can finish a project below budget and ahead of schedule.

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