Five Leadership Secrets for Challenging Times

Ed Sykes

We consistently face new and ever growing challenges in the workplace such as reorganizing, downsizing, and "left out sizing." We are faced with the question, "How do we lead in this storm of change?" It may seem difficult at times and the decisions we make define our short-term and long-term outcomes. I will share with you five leadership techniques guaranteed to keep you on track during these difficult times.

Integrity. I put this first because the lack of integrity will make or break you as a professional, as a leader, as a person in the long run. The lack of this will turn yesterday's heroes in today's villains. For example, "MCI was the apple of the business community's eye. High revenues, high profits, and high growth; MCI was beating the competition hands down. Then it was discovered that there were gross accounting irregularities that accounted for the astounding profits. You see, management made a decision, "Do I continue to sustain good growth and be able to look at myself in the mirror or do I cook the accounting books and spend the rest of my time covering up this integrity deficiency? The real shame of the MCI situation was that AT&T, Sprint, and others in the industry had to cut costs and lay off thousands of employees to compete with MCI's false numbers. The lack of integrity at MCI not only affected the company but also the livelihood

of thousands and the industry as a whole. I was recently speaking with a recently retired City Council member who is well respected in the community. I asked her what the secret was to her success while on the council. She mentioned that one of her political adversaries said to her, "While you were on the council, I didn't like the way you voted, but I respected the way you voted because you were consistent with your votes and had the city's best interest in mind."

Ask yourself what decisions that you make are right for the long term? Be consistent in your actions, whether it is with management, your team, or your family.

Knowledge. With change happening faster and faster every moment, it is extremely important that you gain the knowledge to master these changes. You owe it not only to yourself, but to your team and management. As I always say, "It's not having the right answer, it's that you have the right answer faster than before." Many times during my teambuilding programs a student will say, "I didn't know where to find the answer." Then I will say, "That is an unacceptable answer." because part of being a leader is acquiring the skills to find the right answers. With the Internet, classroom and online training, mentors, etc., the knowledge is at your fingertips.

Challenge your team members to use the same resources to acquire the knowledge to master

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their challenges. By acquiring this knowledge, you will be able to navigate your team through the ocean of change and achieve your goals.

Decisiveness. You have seen them. They wait for information, then more information before making a decision. Then they need more information to support the information they already have. Then they need a committee to analyze the information. Then they wait for the perfect time to make the decision. Well, you know what I mean. Anyone you know? Make the decision! Good things happen when you take action; you grow, you adapt, and your team grows. There is no perfect time to make a decision. Leaders make decisions based on past experience, putting into action the decision, and staying and adapting the decision if needed. But make the decision.

The worst quality you can show your team is indecision. What do you think your team sees when you can't make a decision? Make the decision and go for it.

Vision. This is the ability not only to see what is the present - anyone can do that - it's the ability to see the future. Outstanding leaders can not only see their team for what they can do now, but what they can become, and paint the picture for them. These leaders are consistently communicating and coaching their team members to that vision. One of the best ways and least used methods to convey your vision is the team meeting (Teambuilding and Coaching Skills for Outstanding Results). Every meeting should start out with the team vision, mission, and goals; and the rest of the meeting should tie into the vision. For example, the motiva-

tion portion of the meeting should tie into the vision, the information portion of the meeting should tie into the vision, the training portion of the meeting should tie into the vision, etc. Also, invest time to develop your team members' personal visions and show them how they can accomplish their personal goals by tying into the overall vision.

By consistently communicating the vision, your team will move with purpose, feel they are personally making a difference, and achieve their goals sooner.

Unselfishness. Stephen Covey, in his successful book *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, wrote that a true leader must be a servant to the ones he or she leads. The leader must be able to "give of oneself for the good of the team." In other words, be unselfish in words and action. Be unselfish in praise of others, in pub-

lic, especially in front of management. Be unselfish in the ability to take time to listen, really listen to your team's concerns. A recent management survey said that the average time management invests doing "pure listening" to employees during the year is a mere two hours—just two hours! What was meant by "pure listening" time was listening with eye contact, acknowledgement, and not answering the phone while listening, not speaking with another person while listening, etc. Be unselfish in the ability to help your team, whether it's the ability to readily assist with a difficult telephone call, jump in and remove road blocks for team members, or "be there" for a team member during challenging moments. Believe me, your team will remember those moments and excel for you.

Now I challenge you to put into action just one of the leadership

techniques I mentioned above to achieve your vision, your mission, and your goals in the future.

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Thoughts on Leadership

It is difficult to say what is impossible for the dream of yesterday is the hope of today and the reality of tomorrow.

Robert Goddard

It is only as we develop others that we permanently succeed.

Harry S. Firestone

You see things and you say, "Why" But I dream things that never were; And I say, Why not?

George Bernard Shaw.

You miss 100% of the shots you never take.

Wayne Gretsky

To lose sight of the beauty of ideas and of hope and opportunity, and to frustrate the right to be needed, is to be at the dying edge.

Max De Pree

I just wish people would realize that anything is possible if you try...dreams are made if people try.

Terry Fox

I don't believe for a minute that I am going to save the world, but if we have a few hundred people saying, I can make a difference, we will.

David Suzuki

The captain of the ship description so frequently applied to principals may well be made obsolete by the use of team leadership, wherein a "teacher team" assumes the role of principal ship in a school. *Report on Living and Learning(MOET)*

Learning(MOET)

If nothing changes-nothing changes