

How to Strengthen Your LEADERSHIP

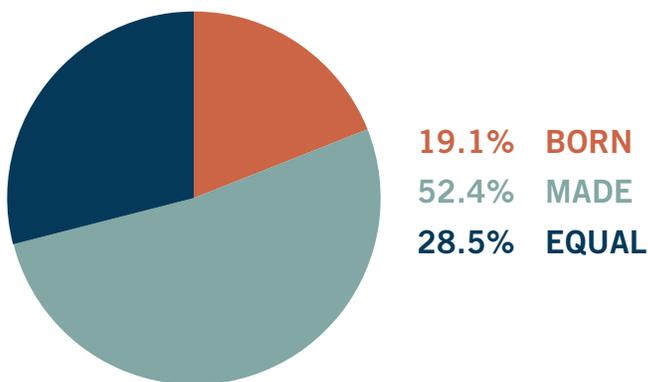
SHARED THOUGHTS FOR TURNING VISION INTO ACTION

There's a saying that has long been attributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson: build a better mousetrap, and the world will beat a path to your door.

While the quality of the mousetrap (or widget, or service, or whatever your organization offers) is certainly important, there's something else you need to build better in order to truly succeed: your leadership.

There has long been debate over whether leadership is something you're born with or something you can create. Although there's no conclusive answer to the question, a recent survey of senior executives from over 50 countries shows that most leaders acknowledge that there's more to good leadership than genetics.

ARE LEADERS BORN OR MADE?



Source: Survey, Center for Creative Leadership, March 2012

Leadership isn't just an innate set of qualities, it's a skill. And like any other skill, it must be developed and honed if you want to be the very best you can be.

WHAT MAKES OR BREAKS A LEADER?

There are managers, and then there are leaders. Not all managers make effective leaders, although the best leaders often also possess the capability to manage.

“Management is about persuading people to do things they do not want to do, while leadership is about inspiring people to do things they never thought they could.”

- STEVE JOBS

To be an effective leader and to develop other leaders within your organization, you've got to determine the right balance of authority and influence for your enterprise. Both have their merits and their place; the key is knowing when to use each.

Authority tends to be more structured, drawing on titles and institutions for strength. It can be an excellent management tool, but used alone it won't inspire followership.

Influence, on the other hand, is less formal and less coercive. It relies on the strength of the relationship, having a common vision and goals, and the inner needs of the follower to drive higher level actions and behavior. Can it be used for management? Of course. Must it be used in high doses for true leadership? Absolutely.

How can you improve leadership within your organization? We've identified 35 fundamental principles of leadership. From understanding the role of character, capability and chemistry to battling fatigue to converting the energy of fear and worry into progress and results. Each principle can be taught - and used to evaluate your current leadership and identify ways to improve your skills.

LEADERSHIP PITFALLS

In addition to identifying and sharpening your leadership skills, it helps to know some of the common mistakes leaders make. By understanding these pitfalls and why they happen, you can avoid them in your own organization.

Three of the 18 common leadership mistakes are:

1. Constantly changing focus.

As a leader, you have to be able to juggle a lot of demands and respond quickly to different circumstances. Be careful that dealing with fires or a desire for quick results doesn't cause you to stray from your vision, goals or emphasis. And take a moment to help your team understand how seemingly off-compass requirements relate to the overall path. Otherwise, changing focus or appearing to change focus can result in your team's time and energy being wasted on trying to decipher the new direction.

2. Lack of accountability.

Leaders at all levels are responsible for getting results. That means being accountable for their own actions and the actions of their direct reports or the team they're working with. If you as a leader don't hold subordinates accountable, you're sending the message that failure to perform is acceptable. And if you don't take accountability for what your team does or fails to do, you're telling those above you that you don't really want to be a leader.

3. Inattention to culture.

While you need results that are measurable, don't forget that the true raw materials for success are the hearts and minds of your people. If you don't understand what's going on inside your team and create an environment that supports their success, you're undermining your

organization's overall performance. Be consistent in communicating your vision and reinforcing the type of performance you value.

Remember what it was like in the trenches and what inspired you to do great work, then try to weave that into your current leadership approach. Talk – and listen – to your team.

HONE YOUR LEADERSHIP SKILLS

A small percentage of the world's population is, quite possibly, naturally born to lead. Another small percentage probably has no business leading at all. The vast majority of us fall somewhere in between. The great thing is that you can take steps to move where you fall on the spectrum. Leadership is a skill, and the best leaders invest the time and energy to understand and improve that skill.

Leadership is “the skill of influencing people to enthusiastically accomplish common goals with character that inspires excellence.”

- JIM HUNTER IN THE SERVANT

At Applied Vision Works, our passion is helping people become more powerful leaders who increasingly build capabilities in themselves, their team, and their community. These leaders not only get increased results, but they and those connected to them live better lives. We offer practical advice and consistent mentorship to help you and your team overcome hurdles, drive the markets you are in, and become the best you can possibly be. If you're ready to achieve results that are even greater than you thought possible, give us a call.



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