

Leading by Example

Leading by example is a term that is bandied around with abandon. What do we mean when we say lead by example? Certainly it means to be seen by others as a role model. This means being seen to practice the behaviours you expect of others. No one is perfect, it is not expected you will be perfect; it is expected you will try your best to behave appropriately and be able to learn from your mistakes. This means being able to say sorry, admit to mistakes and do better next time.

Leading by example means living a balanced existence. This doesn't mean compromising on everything. Sometimes compromise is required however in many instances there are alternatives, different ways of looking at things. Leaders seek to obtain and present differing perspectives. They accept compromise only when that is the only option. Leaders seek to make decisions that are sustainable. Roger Martin, Dean of Rotman School of Management and author of *The Opposable Mind. How Successful Leaders Win through Integrative Thinking*, suggests leaders seek to identify alternatives through a process of building a 'big picture'. Instead of simply accepting things as they appear on the surface, Martin suggests leaders seek to identify the important factors, they focus on what is important and they seek to understand the relationships and impacts of those factors *before* they move to make a decision. Martin is suggesting those that lead by example make informed decisions.

Those that lead by example treat others with dignity and respect. Leaders are compassionate. They inherently understand everyone; no matter their circumstances contribute to the workplace and to society. If there is one indisputable fact of life it is that some people live a more fortunate life than others. Leaders accept the inequities of life as being just that; they accept with judgment and without condemnation. Those that are less fortunate have a right to expect to be treated as if they were just like anyone else. What goes round often comes round and those that treat others with respect and dignity will likely find themselves being treated the same way. When the chips are down and you are looking for people to champion your cause, look to those you treat well as those you have insulted will be looking follow someone else.

Leading by example means being able to communicate. How does one communicate well? By asking questions and listening. Leaders are naturally inquisitive. They view every situation as an opportunity to learn something from the experience. When you lead by example you make time to reflect, to think, to consider the options before you speak. When you take the time to listen, to reflect, to learn and to understand the root cause of an issue then you earn the right to speak, with authority. In those circumstances others want to listen to what you have to say.

When you lead by example you see both the downside and the humour in any situation; in particular the humour. Being able to laugh at oneself, at one's own mistakes is a definable leadership quality. Laughter helps to lighten the burden. Avoid jokes unless you are certain of your ability to deliver the

punch line and you are equally sure no one will be offended by the storyline. Be wary of laughing at others; it is so easy for others to misinterpret your intentions. Laughter causes people to draw a breath and to relax. Laughter is a positive thing.

Positivity should be your middle name. Leaders need to lead others through change. They achieve this by helping others understand the positive aspects of change. They use positivity to balance the negative aspects of work. In some people negativity can lead to depression and illness. Positive people want to come to work, they want to be with others and they want to share and collaborate. Being positive is not about slogans and new age mantras. Positivity displays itself in your attitude, the language you use, how you approach issues and people. Along with positivity is the ability to have fun. Enjoy your work. Remember the more you give the more you will get back in return.

This management tip has been brought to you compliments of John Coxon & Associates. We have developed an Integrated Management Process (IMP), including a suite of diagnostic tools, designed to help you develop the potential of your management group and align their effectiveness with your mission, strategy and outcome. We work with management teams and managers in the health sector and not for profit sector in Australia and New Zealand. Telephone Australia (03)5561 2228 or NZ (0272) 583232. Email john@johncoxon.com.au or go to our website at www.johncoxon.com.au or www.johncoxon.co.nz. Please feel free to pass this information onto anyone you feel may benefit.