

The Power of Leadership

by Jon Craighead

Some may view leadership as a position riddled with multiple and onerous levels of responsibilities and restraints; such thoughts are often used as justifications for leadership avoidance. However, while leadership is demanding, it also provides an opportunity to make an enormous difference both materially and physically, which makes it a most rewarding and satisfying life experience. This article's title, "The Power of Leadership," may have a negative connotation for some, yet this usage is intended to describe a innate expression of self-confidence which sets successful leaders apart from ordinary leaders. Their self-efficacy heightens their confidence to achieve personal goals while making a difference for others - powerfully.

All institutions are vulnerable, regardless of how great or well established, successful, or revered they have been. Nevertheless, their viability is directly correlated and dependent on the depth of their core leadership competence. Therefore, their commitment to leadership development is crucial. Three of the most frequently recognized powerful sources of leadership effectiveness are: (1) the power of expertise, (2) the power of technology, and (3) the power of relationships. Antithetically, it is well documented and repeatedly affirmed by experts and enlightened leaders that chastisement or belittling others is the least-effective foundation for leadership accomplishment. Successful leaders universally recognize that a foremost managing responsibility is identifying and mentoring potentially talented employees, then investing time and resources into their professional development and success, both individually and as team members.

Organizational failure may be caused either by ineffectual leadership or unforeseen circumstances. Rarely do organizations escape the normal ups and downs of success. Research indicates that organizational decline is largely self-inflicted, and recovery most often depends on the level of leadership's resiliency to meet the on-coming disruptive influences. Another crucial responsibility of leadership is the ongoing training and developing of a core of next-generation skilled leadership. This is an ever-evolving key role of experienced leaders at all levels to prepare a succession of skilled competent leadership trainees to ensure competitiveness.

The signature accomplishment of the exceptionally talented leader versus the marginally successful leader is not the absence of difficulty, but the ability to come back from setbacks, even cataclysmic catastrophes, stronger than before. Great companies can fail and recover. Great social institutions can fail and recover. Powerful leaders and their companies very rarely get totally or enduringly knocked out of the game when they remain mission-focused regardless of circumstances. Such leaders recover

themselves and do what it takes to return to what originally made them successful, then reconfigure themselves to effectively meet the newly challenging demands. Those who don't or can't reinvent themselves to make these adjustments don't recover.

Most importantly, senior leadership must focus on their company's ability to maintain current operational excellences and marketability into the unknown future. This is facilitated by scientifically studying trends and counter trends to retain a competitive edge and preventing an unconscious morphing from uniqueness to commonplaceness. Some warning signs of detrimental organizational behavior are: undisciplined leadership, hubris or excessive over confidence, denial of risk, unwarranted panic, and failure to celebrate success or avoiding or acknowledging failure. These very human behavior patterns necessitate an intense and vigilant intervention of technical and ethical reality checks throughout the organization. When these behaviors are forthrightly confronted, the result is a dedicated and assertive commitment to organizational excellence.

The antithesis of leadership is followership, which identifies those looking for leaders to follow. This is an honorable partnership for those who choose a supportive role. However, for those who love a challenge and relish personal growth and development, choosing to take on a position of leadership would be the role for you. The opportunity to lead in today's challenging and stimulating environment calls for our best talents, providing a sense of accomplishment and bountiful rewards.

The ultimate gift to a powerful leader is the trust given and received from others. A leader's reward is the difference they contribute to the success of others. The late Ray Kroc said, "The quality of a leader is reflected in the standards they set for themselves." Their ultimate gift is the standards powerful leaders set for themselves and others to follow. This responsibility is excitingly rewarding and simultaneously arduous, which is the frisson of leadership.