

February 2006, Leadership Presidential Style

With the celebration of President's Day around the corner, it is appropriate to look at the lessons to be learned by examining presidential leadership. In an article, which first appeared in Leader to Leader magazine, Doris Kearns Goodwin, the best selling author and noted Presidential historian offers ten lessons for leaders of today's organizations that were common among Lyndon Johnson, John Kennedy, and Franklin Roosevelt, even though they were three very different people and presidents.

- Timing is (almost) everything. Knowing when to introduce an initiative, when to go before one's constituents -- and when to hold off -- is a crucial skill.
- Anything is possible if you share the glory. Giving others a chance to claim credit is an easy, and effective, way to get results.
- Trust, once broken, is seldom restored. It is the most fragile yet essential attribute of leadership. No leader can afford to take his word lightly.
- Leadership is about building connections. Effective leaders make people feel they have a stake in common problems.
- Leaders learn from their mistakes. To succeed, leaders must acknowledge and understand and improve on their shortcomings.
- Confidence - not just in oneself - counts. Most leaders are self-confident, sometimes to a fault; the real gift is the ability to extend faith in oneself to others. That means actually believing in their gifts.
- Effective partnerships require devotion to one's partners. Attention to the needs of the remote plant or institution pays off with energetic commitment.
- Renewal comes from many sources. Leaders must know themselves and find their own sources of strength.
- Leaders must be talent brokers. The ability to identify, recruit, and effectively manage the best and brightest people -- including people unlike oneself -- is itself a key talent.
- Language is one's most powerful tool. Without the ability to communicate, leaders can possess all the other attributes and still fail to have an impact.