

Leadership Through Competing And Caring

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INTRODUCTION

“Leadership is not a private reserve of a few charismatic men and women. It is a process ordinary people use when they are bringing forth the best from themselves and others. Liberate the leader in everyone, and extraordinary things happen”. Leadership is defined by what we do, not the role we are in”. Some people in “Leadership Roles” only can perform as Leaders, they are bosses not leaders. Conversely, many people have no formal leadership role and yet are excellent leaders. In today’s fast changing world, we all need to be leaders. To lead is to show the way by going in advance. To lead is to guide or direct a course of action. To lead is to influence the behaviour or opinion of others. We all need to be leaders, regardless of our formal title or role. The process of becoming a leader is the same as the process of becoming a highly effective human being. Leadership development is personal development.

LEADERSHIP - COMPETING AND CARING

These are two words that seemingly do not belong in the same sentence, but on deeper reflection are the two most critical guiding principles for the growth of a developing nation. To grow economically, a country’s people and corporates need to compete effectively not just among themselves but also with their global counterparts.

For overall development, a country must continuously ‘Care’ about the underprivileged sections of the society, to ensure their development and contribution to this growth. If our efforts do not include the empowerment of all, the nation cannot sustain a medium to long term progress graph. In fact in the absence of this ‘Caring’, there is fear of increasing social disparity, leading to internal instability.

THE ROAD TO COMPETITIVENESS: CREATING LEVERAGE THROUGH CARING AND MENTORING

About a hundred years ago, when modern business organizations were conceptualized, Management built a world of squares, boxes and pyramids. The world operated on principles of control, order hierarchy and other concepts such as climbing the ladder, top and bottom, etc. In this world, rank equaled authority and the CEO sat at the top of the pyramid looking down at the rest of the organization. But there is revolution going on currently. Global competition and blurring boundaries indicate that the old rules and structures are inapplicable in the current environment. There is cynicism inside the organization that is structured in the conventional way. The tightly boxed structure and the organizational hierarchy are killing the innovativeness, spirit and morale of the employees.

There is also a new set of the organizations that have emerged or are emerging, which lead with a difference. A new more inclusive, language of leadership is being developed – “Learning to lead people and not contain them”, “Followership comes from trust”.

Jack Welch once stated, “Ten years from now, we want magazines to write about GE as a place where people have the freedom to be creative, a place that brings out the best in everybody; an open, fair place where people have sense that what they say matters and where that sense of accomplishment is rewarded – both in the pocket book and the soul”.

The Importance of People in the organization is aptly reflected by the title that Mr. N.R. Narayana Murthy of Infosys has chosen for himself: Chairman and Chief Mentor. Over the years, one of the obvious focus areas that Mr. Narayana Murthy has highlighted is the people, their development and his desire to create an entrepreneurial mindset within his large organization.

PRINCIPLES - A LEADER MUST FOLLOW TO CREATE AN ORGANIZATION OF MOTIVATED, DEDICATED AND SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYEES:

1. Develop and communicate a Common Shared Vision:

Across organizations, industries and countries are undergoing change; leaders have to work harder to carry their communities and constituencies with them.



Fig. 1 Climbing Pyramid

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They need to value people and emotions, make things interesting and most importantly provide inspiration. Herb Kelleher, Chairman, President and CEO of Southwest Airlines, one of the most successful national airlines in America says, “Our real accomplishment is that we have inspired our people to buy into a concept, to share a feeling and an attitude to identify with the company – and then to execute.

2. Treat People differently, based on their strengths:

It is up to the leader to develop a deep understanding of each of his/her employees, their strengths and weaknesses, their motivators and personal ambitions. With an adequate understanding of these elements for each individual, the leader can channelise and leverage each employee’s energy in the most effective manner.

3. Set high standards, but give people the freedom and responsibility to do their job:

High standards along with adequate degree of freedom transform people to be creative and resourceful. It is important to make people feel liberated at the job – to be creative, to think out-of-the-box. On the other hand, without this freedom, to experiment and be creative employees end up becoming puppets that can only follow the orders of their superiors and lack all leadership and entrepreneurial qualities.

4. Make Communication a Priority:

Employees have a deep rooted need to be informed about what is happening at all levels in the organizations. The President of an International organization has one-to-one, twenty minutes conversation with each employee in his organization about ideas, improvements and whatever is on the employee’s mind. He devotes about 170 hours to this task every year and feels it is time well spent.

5. Anything is possible if you Share the Glory:

Giving another the chance to claim credit and bask in the praise is an effective and often easy way to get results. Success and its recognition can be the best motivators for the employees in the organization.

6. Responsibility – “If it’s to be, it’s up to me”:

Leadership means accepting responsibility for all choices in life. They refuse to succumb to the ‘Victimitus Virus’ (“It is all their fault and there is nothing I can do”).

7. Passion and Commitment:

Successful people are energized by a love for what they do because it brings them ever closer to who they are. They overcome apathy and cynicism, develop a burning commitment to their cause, and with discipline, achieve their dreams and desires.

Sant Balbir Singh Seechewal, Chairman of Ek Onkar Trust took the cause of cleaning the rivulet “Kali Bein” (once associated with Guru Nanak Dev and it had been reduced to a dirty drain). With extraordinary leadership qualities of Sant Seechewal, the clarity of his vision and his ability to inspire the masses, he steered his movement through the labyrinths of politics and his vision and ability to inspire, all played a major role in bringing his mission to completion. However, the Sant himself is the first to comment that it is the ‘Sangat’ – the people – who have made the difference. They have transformed a dirty drain into a pristine river and have shown the way.

CONCLUSION:

Leaders don’t motivate with rewards and punishments. They engage people’s hearts as well as their minds. They get them involved and participating. They actively nurture the ‘being’ on culture of the group, not just the “doing”. The list above is no way comprehensive. Each leader has to discover what applies best in his/her organization and best suited to his/her personal style. However, if the overall realization exists that the people of the organization are going to be at the core of the organization’s sustenance and growth; and adequate efforts are made to align the employees’ energies with those of the motivators, success cannot be elusive.

The more the world changes, the more Leadership Principles stay the same. Leadership Principles are timeless. And they apply to all of us, no matter what role we play in society or organizations. Genuine leadership comes from within. It is authentic and based on honesty, integrity, trust and ensuring consistency with our stated values and principles.

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