

Are you an emotionally intelligent leader?

by Dennis Roberts

Every organisation needs a leader. In fact, every individual within an organisation at some stage will be called upon to display leadership qualities. It is not the exclusive domain of the Chief Executive Officer. It begs the question what qualities make for a good leader? According to Kouzes and Posner authors of the widely acclaimed "The Leadership Challenge" there are five practices of exemplary leadership. They are:

Model the way

Clarify your personal values and set the example for others to follow by walking your talk. Model the behaviour that you expect of others. The most potent form of adult learning is through doing and the easiest way to learn what to do is to observe and copy. Executive coaches use role-plays with clients to play out scenarios and improve skills levels. The demonstration of you living your values through your actions is critical for your credibility as a leader.

Inspire a shared vision

Open your mind and share the future possibilities of what might be for your business and your staff. Engage an independent facilitator to conduct offsite-planning sessions in a participatory manner with key staff. Techniques such as brainstorming, mind mapping and scenario planning are also handy. Once the high level strategic vision has been crafted then franchisees can, in turn, meet with their staff to create marketing and operational plans in the same manner.

Challenge the process

Encourage a culture of risk taking and proactivity amongst staff that has them feeling empowered to make decisions. Of course you need to find the balance with prudent internal controls in place. People will make mistakes, what you want is to create a climate of trust, support and a learning environment with a quick cycle time to prevent the same mistakes being made. Foster a feedback loop where people learn from their mistakes and search for innovative ways to change, grow and improve.



Enable others to act

Delegate authority and set clear performance expectations. Clearly defined goals framed through a collaborative goal setting process will help staff feel part of the big picture and also liberate their lateral thinking capability. They will operate in the bigger context rather than a vacuum.

Encourage the heart

Recognise the contributions of staff and show appreciation with a mix of financial and non-financial rewards. These may range from a pat on the back, employee of the month certificate, public or private acknowledgement or a simple thank you for a job well done. Ken Blanchard, author of "The One Minute Manager" coined the phrase 'catch people doing things right'. Surveys have shown that acknowledgements are one of the most effective, cheapest and yet underused forms of performance recognition.

Take time out to celebrate victories - this serves to bond staff members, build effective teams and staff morale.

One of the strengths of the business franchise system is the detailed operational processes and procedures to be followed. This removes much of the guesswork at

the operational and even marketing level. However one thing remains as sure as night follows day and that is everyone is different and has different values, attitudes and beliefs. The leadership challenge is to embrace the cultural and personal differences and work with them rather than against them.

Cultural Diversity

It takes courage to detach oneself from the values, attitudes and beliefs that are deeply ingrained in our psyche. Remaining open and non-judgemental is essential to effective leadership. Cultural diversity offers a way of reframing problems through different perspectives. When brainstorming the quickest way to get an alternate perspective is to ask someone else.

The Soft Stuff

Many professional development programs I have come across focus on technical skills to the exclusion of emotional intelligence. Why? Generally because Return on Investment (ROI) is more easily tracked to measures of output, eg profits, sales, customers. Within companies there is much lip service paid to the notion of 'people are our greatest resource'. I find that people skills, especially communications, relationships and emotions (eg self-esteem, confidence, rejection, fear, love) are the areas that present the greatest challenge not the technical areas. Our business environment is complex, highly regulated and with a clear and present danger of litigation hanging over our heads should we breach our obligations. Yet we rely inevitably rely on the co-operation of people (customers, staff, shareholders, suppliers) to get the job done. People skills permeate every waking moment of our lives - both at home and at work.



Critics of the new age movement dismiss talk of emotions in the workplace as 'soft stuff', which serve to detract from running a profitable commercial enterprise. Daniel Goleman in 'Emotional Intelligence' writes of people having two minds - an emotional mind and a rational mind and of the need for them to co-exist in partnership for an individual to be fully effective as a person and leader. Stephen Covey in 'Principle Centred Leadership' distinguishes between transactional leadership and transformational leadership. To truly transform your staff and your organisation you need to incorporate three key elements: - ethos (ethics) - pathos (emotions) - logos (logic). This body of work emphasises the need for work/life balance and a holistic approach to wellbeing. This is a place for the expression of emotions in the workplace. An appropriate expression is the key. Suppression of emotions is unhealthy.

Business analysts use predictive success measures (lead indicators) to anticipate future results. Similarly in the field of preventative health or wellness there is a growing trend to preventative treatments. There is a growing body of research suggesting that the alignment of personal values and company values is central to performance. The field of consumer behaviour has long held the view that emotions are the driving force behind most buying decisions. So, we see that to be an effective salesperson it is necessary to understand emotional intelligence. It is not just a warm and fuzzy phenomenon but it is grounded in commercial reality - if you can identify the underlying emotional cues you are well positioned to make the sale.

Active Listening

The skill of active listening is to listen for the meaning conveyed through the words, tone and body language. A prominent dating expert in the USA suggests that "attraction is not a choice" but rather operates at your deeper emotional core. The same is true for consumer psychology and elements of rapport building.

The Four Dimensions

An integrated understanding of the intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual energy forces make for a truly great leader. At an intellectual level whatever you give energy to with your thoughts will tend to manifest in your life. To master your intellectual dimension use affirmations, and catch yourself thinking negative thoughts immediately and replace them with positive self-talk.

For spiritual mastery practice meditation or prayer, find a quiet place to relax and unwind. Make it ritual. Set aside time when you cannot be disturbed.

We drain our emotional energy when we suppress our emotions. I found acting classes to be enormously beneficial to release emotional energy. Being at play and laughing have huge emotional benefits. The range of movement - physical, vocal and emotional heightens your self-expression.

Maintaining a healthy diet and being physically fit and active is essential to function let alone to operate at peak performance.

How do you become a better leader?

Leadership must come from the inside out. The more you have your act together and an unwavering confidence in yourself the more this energy will radiate outward and be felt by those around you. Here are seven areas for you to focus on:

1. Self-awareness

If things don't work out set aside time at the end of the day to reflect and learn from your experiences; actively invite constructive feedback from customers and staff on a regular basis; develop a strong sense of self; practice effective time management - plan and review your day, learn and improve.

2. Build rapport with people

Learn how to actively listen and refrain from solving the worlds' problems. One wise scribe referred to this move as 'resigning his position as captain of the universe'; make yourself available and be easy to approach and open minded; express appreciation regularly.

3. Set clear expectations

Having stated your expectations "My expectations of you are ..." then invite buy in "... is that reasonable?" or invite the other party to paraphrase "I've shared my expectations with you, can you paraphrase for me your understanding of I expect from you?"

4. Identify the need to lead

Display astute business sense in every situation; speak to alternative sources to discover the facts; focus on short and long-term issues; test and measure results of change.

5. Determine a course of action

Take the most important action first; consider your options; offer direction that is doable; take decisive action and know when to abandon a course of action.

6. Develop others as leaders

Attract staff who want to develop their leadership skills; coach and train those with leadership potential; allow others the freedom to resolve issues; work with individuals at their own pace of learning.

7. Build commitment

Clarify roles and seek commitment; demonstrate the impact of actions; form alliances with key people; build credibility with every action.

There have been hundreds of books written on the topic of leadership and it remains one of the most sought after learning and development streams. I encourage you to take action on the items herein that resonate with you and seek out your own role model. Being an effective leader will help you reach your goals quicker than anything else you may choose.



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